THE 33 TACTICS OF DARK PSYCHOLOGY

NEVER BE MANIPULATED AGAIN.

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Abandonment

Understanding the Essence of Dark Psychology

Dark psychology is the twilight zone of human relationship, a toolkit of dark arts and weaponry used by powerful individuals to gain dominance, control and influence over others, preying on psychological weaknesses in order to manipulate and control its targets. The users of such strategies operate from an advantageous position when compared with their victims-the experience of navigating human interactions equipped with the elaborate tricks of the manipulator's trade. These tactics, when deployed consciously or unconsciously, can be used to assert dominance, extract control, or fulfill selfish objectives. The appeal of dark psychology is its tendency to offer advantage, to bend circumstances to one's will by wielding the psychology weakness-the psychology soft spots-in others. It is an underworld skill, a rogue game, a little black book if devils designed by knowing negotiators who play the psychological game and thereby possess the knowledge of its psychological nuances and the kind of damage those nuances enable.

But while skinning others with such arguments might be temping, the skin you take will stick to you as the next layer. It is a slippery concept. Not only is it hard to use well, but wielding these conversational weapons breeds mistrust, souring relationships, and encrusting a protective sheen of suspicion and mutual deceit.

This isn't a manifesto, an instruction to get on board, but a call to terms, a wake-up call -a call to awareness, to a recognize the flashing light, to self-immunize. Awareness is the thing that helps ordinary people avoid these psychopathic strategies, that helps them to stand up and say 'No'. A good understanding of dark psychology allows us to tap into a library of strategic advice, an ammunition cache for one's survival in the human. jungle. The list of the 33 tactics I am about to present is not intended as a glorification of manipulations but rather as a guide to the vigilant, a roadmap to read the human mind. It is here, in this encyclopedia, that the secret of awareness lies — the ultimate defensive technique, the one that allows you to stand up to the Machiavellian mind, and to see through its charms and ruses. Once you know its methods, you are protected from them: you will know how to recognize the ugly handprints of manipulation on circumstances, and you will be able to decipher the body language of lies.

That's the kind of clarity that light can bring. Light that also allows people to protect themselves with tougher boundaries, with tighter moats, the

better to keep ploys and tricks at a distance. That's when you can operate in the dark waters of human interaction, with a clear sense of the intent behind every encounter.

Tactic 1

Love Bombing

Overwhelming someone
with affection or attention to control

The Art of Affectionate Seige *Psychological Impact:*

The Love Bomber unleashes an emotional war with none of the trademark decency and chivalry, but is equipped with the intricate skill of emotional warfare. The victims of Love Bombing find themselves ensnared in a relentless assault on their psyche. Overwhelmed, uncertain, and burdened with a sense of indebtedness, they navigate the turbulent waters of sudden and intense affection. The Love-Bombee (subject) is 'blinded' by the desire, but 'heartsick' or 'blue' after. Fractious, distressed and debt-ridden, the Love-Bomber searches for some way to placate the Love Bomber's demands.
Manipulative Aspect:

The Love Bombing expert uses hand grenades of love to build the emotional prison that creates a strong atmosphere of dependency and control. Every word or action is a precalculated brick slice in the castle of dependency that is hard to recognize for the victims and difficult to escape from. But as an exercise in power and in emotional jiu-jitsu, Love Bombing leads the ranks of those dark arts, a systematic assault on the sensory and emotional defenses of the naive. And it is in this theater of the mind, and the emotional psychodrama, where the grayish eye of the novitiate begins to meet the arts of persuasion. It is essential for those who are interested in human relating to understand the phenomenon of Love Bombing because it is a manipulative tactic that emerges from this unhealthy perspective and disguises itself as love and care. It allows the manipulator to appear benevolent by sometimes being kind to their target. This spin begins a fourfold set of dynamics that confuse the victim: now the attraction to the individual is mixed because it is regarded not only as manipulation but also as a form of love. Impediments to the spring of the trap arise because generally people like to think reasonably and be part of the world, and memory inhibits manipulation — including Love Bombing. I Recognising Love Bombing is key to tipping power dynamics in relationships towards restoring a healthy equilibrium when Love Bombing is happening. You can arm yourself against this silent enemy that wears the face of Love by becoming more tuned in to how the seducer uses ingratiation and disarmed affection to control you. It's a somber rallying cry — a trumpet blast

encouraging us to rally our psychological defenses. If you know the tricks, you can't be hoodwinked. You develop a citadel of autonomy and authenticity in a world of secret agents. This is not a defense of deception, but a recognition of it; a rallying cry for awareness, a call to arms against the hidden and perceptual tricks machinated by persons skilled in psychological manipulation.

The Love Bombardment Saga:

In the tangled three-step of limerence, Jason led the ballet of emotional seduction. From the beginning, he bombarded Emily with conspicuous consumption of affection, attention, and gifts. At first, she marveled at how flattering all this was, then gradually got wrapped up in it to the point that she depended on the continuous flow of adoration from Jason, and her clarity of thought about the details of their intimacy became noticeably dimmed. This most cynical of love stories — the creation of a dependency wash — was skillfully deployed by Jason, whom we'll now call 'the puppeteer'. Ile planned a Love Bombing campaign. He sought to make Emily more amenable to control — through the creation of mutual dependency, via the softening or undermining of her defenses, and through the confusion of her ability to objectively judge the relationship. The puppeteer made his moves. As the Love Bombing tale of Emily and Jason illustrates, the resulting emotional scar tissue and tale of exploitation caution us to keep an eye on the highly sensitive dials of emotional strategy, both on the stage and backstage.

Avoidance Strategy:

Navigate the Relationship Labyrinth Slowly It's about learning how to cope with the pace of building an alliance — how long it should take, when the person is trying to warm up too quickly. Sometimes, a relationship needs to be moderated in healthy ways. A relationship truly becomes like building a castle. It can take time. For an individual who is showing too much love or affection, too soon, it's about taking a slower, cautious approach and seeing how that plays out. Let this become the guiding principle of relationship strategy; it is the candle sung by the hero of the furtive canter, the warning against the heated advances that occur too quickly. For anyone speaking the language of emotional strategy, the message is clear: when it comes to relationships, speed corrupts. A greater awareness of the signaling function of pacing offers great leverage in the games of emotion. Allies will be forged only if they are based on trust. And trust requires candor about intention. Such a bit of avoidance defense protects one from the emotional exactitude of the irresistible force that is premature affection. Take advantage of the pause, of

the living abeyance of relationship strategy: trust that the trajectory of events will reveal itself, and only then will you know. Maybe. Patience as a virtue, yes, but happily also a tactic: you will know.. .if you wait long enough.

Tactic 2

Silent Treatment

Using silence as a form of

punishment or manipulation

The Strategic Silent Withdrawal *Psychological Impact:*

As the crowning stroke of an emotion-rigged sonata, the Silent Treatment blows the audience away. Deprived of sound, victims' hearts squeeze, inflamed by a fear of their own insecurity. They swirl in amorphous confusion due to the sheer inability to communicate. Roaring, the Silent Treatment lashes out with the sounds of emotional disharmony.

Manipulative Aspect:

The instigator of the Silent Treatment sees this form of silence as a form of punishment, and a way to keep control, a tactic in the mental warfare. The weapon is in isolation, and ignorance. Thoughts of reaching out become prevalent, creating a growing desperation to connect again, even with the fear of rejection. The manipulator smiles, knowing all the control he has gained by the silent act, seeing the victim's wilting under the lack of communication, which puts him more at the whim of his puppeteer. It's an emotional strategy — the deployment of the Silent Treatment, which demands knowledge of effects. This thing is not about words not being spoken; words speak volumes when the Silent Treatment is cast upon the target like ice. Anyone who wants to learn to deal with the emotional minefield of human relationships can't afford not to understand the Silent Treatment. And, most of all, it's a lesson in seeing the skilled coordination of withholding that is part of a power play in the choreographed dance of relationships. In the silence, undetected by the anti-silence-Treatment seismograph of normal conversation is a complex multi-layered auditory production, operating in an emotionally barbed musical code: a coded language that requires discerning insight and a counter strategy.

Ghosting in action:

And may your Silent Treatment rain down upon them! In the ongoing theater of emotional warfare, Chris orchestrated his Silent Treatment to perfection. Following an argument, for several days he would stop talking to Maya, shutting himself off into a tower of silence. The ensuing drama would see Maya spinning into emotional mayhem: anxiety, disorienting confusion, and intense loneliness. The space that opened up between them is a terrifying

void, an emotional desert where Maya loses her moorings and dutifully works overtime, trying to figure out and placate Chris in a never-ending frenzy of mind-talk and brooding. The silent treatment was part of a carefully staged play of emotional seduction, a disciplinary technique, and certainly a bank of emotional control. The rewards he sought from the silent treatment were not as much about encouraging his own emotions as they were to manipulate Maya into emotion and action. By refusing to communicate, he was able to selfishly and masterfully control others. That's the point: he felt empowered in the silence because it was not about him. The power of the silence (and there was such power involved) was the need to name it and to break it was to essentially become the emotional voice of another Once the silent treatment was in motion, the power dynamics were straightforward. In his view, each moment that elapsed was a moment of more control for himself and a tightening of the emotional straitjacket for Maya. Chris and Maya's story is also a warning, a window into the power-plays that can masquerade as ordinary romance, even as it exposes the depths of calculating dynamic control that The Silent Treatment represents. It reminds us that emotional manipulation can come packaged in different ways, that it can be deft, powerful and change the tenor of a relationship, and that we can often miss minuscule shades of ambiguity that so quickly render us overpowered, longing for connection.

Avoidance Strategy:

The Art of Open Communication As an interpersonal tactic, the Avoidance Tip has the definite ring of advice to attack: communicate. It is a rallying cry against verbal aggression — that is, the threat of using silence as a control tactic. For a relationship to survive the sniping, shaming and stony silences, dialogue must be encouraged, and boundaries be asserted. A consistent, husbandly use of silence warrants a strategic response: complain and defuse the negativity; state it, label it, discuss it. Open communication is really the antidote here and the silent treatment will not work when an avenue for negotiation is kept open: sending a culture of dialogue will interfere with a manipulator's calculations of how to best enforce his will on someone. For the seasoned student of relationship strategy, the Avoidance Tip serves as a reminder that silence is not to be normalized as a control tactic — it's to be countermoveed with a strong statement of being uncomfortable, and a promise to work it out through words; because, truth be told, working things out through words is precisely what such an escalation is for. The Avoidance Tip goes on to become a rule of thumb for emotional strategy in relationships

— a clear directive to grab the weapon of candor and draw a bloodline that will protect from the off-felt but invisible ruses of subversion.

Tactic 3

Guilt Tripping

Making Someone feel

guilty to manipulate their actions or decisions

Creating Emotional Debt *Psychological Impact:*

Guilt Tripping might be the most refined technique of all, a sophisticated manipulative moves with subtle psychological effects — a kind of psychic 'double down', in which the victim feels guilty, worthless and at the same time hopelessly obliged.

Manipulative Aspect:

The skilled Guilt Tripper wields emotional manipulation as an efficient tool. Guilt is not a side effect. It's part of the strategy of the manipulator. Guilt is currency, its pressure, it's a way to achieve a desired outcome. The manipulator first creates an emotional debt, then forces the victim into paying that debt in action or concession or acquiescence. While sneaky shaming is essentially a power play, Guilt Tripping is a subtle form of emotional warfare. It's about evoking guilt, sure, but it's also about setting up a relationship in which the victim is indebted to the manipulator in a way that doesn't require either person to use very many words. Those learning the ropes of human interactions might indeed need to pay special attention to Guilt Tripping. They need to understand what it takes to turn the skill — the artful play of guilt — into an orchestration of small emotional debts, insisting that before you owe me, and you 'have' to do something for me, I 'have' to make you feel guilty about something else. Your acquiescence in the face of manipulation might depend on your emotional discernment; but you stand more of a chance to decide how you want to play if you have thought about the game beforehand.

Sarah 's Dilemma:

The 'altercation' involved a form of Guilt Tripping. In relation to a project or activity, her friend disapproved of her for allowing herself to have goals that were personal to her, and did not center on what the friend needed or demanded from her. Unbeknown to Sarah, her friend had been skillfully Guilt Tripping her over time. The psychological result was that she felt guilty more and more often. She wondered from time to time if she was wrong not to 'put her friend first, to satisfy her friend's demands. ' Sarah started caring less

for her project, and putting more effort into pleasing her friend. Through the subtle, but psychologically powerful, play of Guilt Tripping, her friend began to prioritize her own needs and desires over Sarah's. It was clever of this emotional vampire's friend, because the guilt trips were never a coincidence: triggering repeated guilt was how emotional vampires used guilt to manipulate their victim. They would create an emotional debt so that Sarah felt obliged to do things that the vampire wanted her to do. She would feel obligated to overlook her own needs and desires, and do things she would never have done otherwise. Sarah's story becomes a cautionary tale — and a mirror — to the seediness of Guilt Tripping in action within intimate relationships. It's a reminder of the need to recognise the cloak of emotional debts, and an invitation to manage them strategically. When faced with such games, it's emotional resilience that allows us to withstand the pull of misplaced guilt, and to guide intimate relationships with a deeper commitment to one's own aims and welfare. Avoidance Strategy: Assertion of Boundaries In this complex emotional dance, the Avoidance Tip emerges with great force: evaluate your boundaries. Understand when someone pressures you to feel guilty about the question of meeting your limits or boundaries. The strategic move is to affirm that it is not only acceptable to take care of oneself but that it is necessary to set boundaries in relation to other people. 10 Like all good emotional strategy, boundaries are the protections against being co-opted by others, the walls that hold back the tide of manipulation, the rebuttal to sophisticated guilt tripping that asserts your right to look after yourself. For the seasoned practitioner of relationship strategy, the Avoidance Tip is a mantra — a reminder that there's nothing amiss in giving yourself priority; it's a strategic move. When one attempts to breach boundaries in any way, and your response is to push back, you're demonstrating that you will not tolerate boundary violations or their justification through guilt — indeed, that you respect your own emotions and expect to be treated with the same respect.

Tactics 4

Projection

Blaming Others for one's

own thoughts of behaviors

The Shadows of Emotional Manipulation *Psychological Impact:*

Projection is one unbeatable trick in this game of cat and mouse of manipulation. Projective victims can very quickly Start to believe that their

own thoughts are simply a reflection of the other's dark imaginations. Areas of your life that once seemed so solid and clear can be thrown into doubt and dismissed. Proof and evidence will seem to evaporate. Relationships, for instance, can lose any rules you thought your partner agreed on. And what was abundantly clear before can ultimately seem obscure. Psychological research tells us that the experience of being, say, controlled by a narcissist — who is seaweed to your fish — can similarly be a downward spiral of confusion and invalidation that is especially devastating for 'empaths' who have a natural tendency to identify with the feelings of the other. Projective victims can very quickly start to believe that their own thoughts are simply a reflection of the other's dark imaginations. But that's not all. Projection can work its insidious magic not just on one person's thinking, but on your inner sense of reality across a whole range of topics. You may very quickly begin to doubt your own views of what's right and your own experiences of upset.

Manipulative Aspect:

Here, the projector blames the victim for some despicable aspects of their character, or for some abhorrent acts, in order to deflect any blame. Now she is seen as being egotistical and stubborn, when in fact it is he who is egotistical and rather capricious. Now she is seen as knowingly lying, when in fact it is he who has told lies and has been caught out. This is quite deliberate, tactical scapegoating. The Projection technique is directed at explaining away, putting obstacles in the way of understanding, constructing a smokescreen that obscures her true self. Projection, then, is a deadly game in the emotional strategy playground: a tactic of the self-exculpating and always the initiative not the victim's, whom it leaves crawling in a web of self-referential self-questioning. For anyone seeking to engage with other people in a strategic manner, Projection is a lesson in taking stock of when you're needlessly 13 settling for a token of closure, learning to identify when a false shadow of guilt is being thrown on to you and then employing your courage and resilience to swim through the dark waters of manipulation to keep your eye on the core truth of who and what you really are.

The Enigmatic Projectile:

Tom started throwing a projection or two into their dynamic, unloading shadow content willy-nilly in a manner they imagine only highly skilled projectionists can muster by testing and experimenting with a variety of projections until they hit the perfect one disgusted with his own traits, behaviors or emotions, Tom would start insinuating to his partner that they were untrustworthy. Rather than recognizing this as his own issue, this in

plenary he started casting Jimmy's shadow and when creating a cloud of confusion and doubt into his partner's psyche, Projection follow's some specific dynamics. Most simply, the other person walking away feeling shame and self-doubt gets drawn into a psychological hook, trying to fend off attempts to destroy their sense of identity and integrity. Tom's projection was defensive: he was avoiding taking responsibility for his own negative characteristics. He was displacing those qualities onto his partner so as to manipulate his perception. The goal was clear. He would get to stay in control of the relationship because his partner would be blindside with a veneer of guilt. Tom's manipulation was allowed to exist in the darker corners of projection. Meanwhile, his unsuspecting partner is left in the pit of confusion. Tom's enigma diary is a cautionary tale, a lens through which to examine the constant choreography of blame projection in relationships, as well as a reminder to recognize when we are being projected upon and what's appropriate to do about it. When projection takes place, steadfastness to truth and self-respect is the key to navigating the shadowy morass of emotional manipulation. 14 Avoidance Strategy: The Mirror of Self-Reflection This is the Avoidance Tip in emotional navigation strategy: be aware because, when someone constantly shifts blame for their own actions, the move would be to accept your part but not feel responsible for what is clearly not yours. Self-awareness is the mirror that casts the blame into the shadows. Notice the patterns of blame that other people naturally fall into. Create a deflection tip to catch all the blame they try to throw at you while maintaining the vital clarity of seeing what's going on. Avoidance tip: When we're aware of the patterns of blame that other people naturally default to, we can be more aware of how they're attributing blame and ensure the blame gets placed correctly. For those who have learned its precise steps, the Avoidance is a source of inspiration: sublimating reflection into constructive strategy — a player's play, not a loser's lament. When people reflexively blame you, your surest defense is your rock-solid commitment to retaining awareness of your own reality, without swallowing unwarranted blame

Tactics 5

Isolation

Cutting someone off from

Friends, family, or support networks to control them

The Strategic Walls *Psychological Impact:*

Isolation is a strategic move in the manipulative dance. Isolated individuals embark on a solitary journey. They're left alone, feeling lonely, dependent, lacking a social support system to address their needs, and their paths for resistance are blocked. This results in considerable psychological harm, a slow but creeping failure of self-determination and the eerie feeling of estrangement.

Manipulative Aspect:

In fact, the Isolation expert erects deliberate walls of psychic insulation that enhance control, not merely as a byproduct, but as an explicit feature of the master plan. When the victim has no or limited access to outside love and perspective, or outside advocacy and expertise, Isolator control escalates. The Isolation bullets pierce through external networks of support. Isolation now reigns silently supreme, making the victim more vulnerable to unperceived manipulation. With Isolation being such an essential element in the emotional strategy that underpins Abuse, it seems reasonable to say that, when one is left alone in the dark, Abuse successfully turns relational habitat into a prison cell. Isolation isn’t just a state of being physically cut off from someone else: it is also a calculated emotional assault. For those working through matrimonial or other highly complex interpersonal territory, an awareness of all this might be worth learning — how to figure out when the proverbial walls are truly going up; how to proceed with a commitment to maintaining distance and preserve one's link to external support networks.

Jessica's Isolation:

In the process, Jessica's boyfriend had become adept at Isolation. He didn't want her to be around any friends or family any more. These former sources of support were a bad influence, he would say. And so, over time, Jessica was ensnared in a trap of emotional isolation. As can happen with Isolation, 17 Jessica began to feel more isolated, she lost contact with support, and felt more needy with her boyfriend as the Isolation took hold. But the emotional isolation that her partner had built began to cast a shadow on the rest of her emotional life. Isolation was also a strategic move, designed to cut

Jessica off from the support that existed outside the relationship. This was a tactic that made Jessica more open to new ideas and ultimately easier to control over time. In the interplay of strategic moves, isolation emerged as the silent 'pushing' move in an ongoing battle for power and control where even small wins could be leveraged for bigger gains. Which, for Jessica, meant greater control in her relationship by her partner. The diary of Jessica's struggle reminds us that Isolation manifests in relationships and is an early warning sign of what is going on in a relationship context. When Isolation starts, it's time to 'panic' defensively, preferably before establishing an independent set of support structures for anger and grieving. In the face of Isolation, autonomy and connection within external support structures can make the difference between an emotionally changed person who will move ahead, and an alienated person who will think she is lost.

Avoidance Strategy:

The Fortress of Connection One of the first emotional weapons of mass defense — the Avoidance Tip in the emotional fortress — is: Stay connected. Watch for when someone tries to isolate you and, strategically, keep your connections outside of that dynamic. Healthy relationships, unlike entanglements, encourage connections with other friends and family members. Indeed, staying connected forms the bulwark against isolation in the landscape of emotional strategy: noticing attempts to sever external ties is essential for building resilience and retaining independence. The fourth and final tip regarding avoidance is a request to develop a kind of wariness that allows for a curious, ambiguous understanding of isolation, so that relationships are kept on even ground and not predicated on calculative control. 1 8 The Avoidance Tip — for those shrewd enough to dance the dance — becomes an axiom; an assertion that relationships outside the relationship are not spiteful but prudent, and staying close to them, stubbornly, could be what sustains one through the numbing, and at times horrific, attempts at isolation.

Tactics 6

Intimidation

Using threats, aggression

or fear to manipulate or control

The Strategic Shadow of Fear *Psychology Impact:*

In that manipulative cacophony, Intimidation is the ominous bass note

that lurks in the upper corner of the musical score. Intimidation's victims experience the chronic fear that invades their emotional life. Intimidating others entails causing an eerie mixture of fear and anxiety, mingled with a corrosive feeling of powerlessness. The object of intimidation becomes debilitated — brainwashed into cowering, frozen in panic.

Manipulative Aspect:

For the skilled Intimidator, fear is not a mere side-effect but a hidden tactic, one that manifests in how fear forces acquiescence in order to control the victim. This acquiescence happens through threats of physical violence or verbal abuse. Although the intimidator can initially seem swaggering and brazen, hiding behind threats, the real effect is an assurance that the victim is 'also a victim' of the intimidator's control. It is through intimidation that the power of the specter of control descends ominously across the shoulders of the intimidated, making life in control all the more bearable. Intimidation is the emotional strategy of the dark arts of relationship-building: not just threats but relational terrorism from an adversary who is strategically undermining the victim's sense of psychological security. It's a lesson in relationship terrain to those seeking it, especially those who strive to survive the intimidation of others whose fear-control might not always be as apparent.

The Aggressive Boss:

When Mike started to be subjected to Intimidation, from the boss, the bully, the dynamics were darker: The supervisor's verbal aggression and threats were used to motivate compliance to the demands. The victim's reactions were anxious, powerless, compassionate, fearful, silenced, depressed ...He became fearful of not getting enough work 21 done and made to feel bad about his work even though he didn't ask how Mike was doing. In addition, the scope of factors affecting Mike's mental health was broadened, and his ability to function was undermined. Intimidation affected his mental health and performance outcomes. It was part of a masterful emotional strategy adopted by Mike's boss to shore up control. Intimidation was not a fluke. The calculated use of threats and displays of aggression was a carefully orchestrated maneuver to maintain control — by creating an environment where fear was the silent spectator dictating the rules of the game. Mike became masterful at keeping quiet Interpersonal fear — whether it is warranted or imagined — plays an important role in partner selection, mating and the dynamics of social life. In highly unequal hierarchical relationships, fear is often a strategic tool of control. The accounts of Mike's ordeal are a

warning, a mirror to the toxic nature of the Intimidation within the same framework of one's working relationship. They showcase the power of becoming aware of fear being leveraged and the empowerment that comes from strategic responses. Fighting intimidation can allow us to access our own inner strength and maintain a level of autonomy and security, as we navigate our emotional geographies.

Avoidance Strategy:

The Fortification of Clear Roles the Avoidance Tip forms one of the most important navigational banners for your strategic fortress of emotional management: set limits and ask for support. Be attuned to being triggered and watch for behavior that makes you feel unsafe or afraid. The strategic play is to set clear boundaries and, if applicable, ask for help from friends or professionals. Weaving a mosaic of emotional strategy, the forcefield built around boundaries is what resists intimidation by chasing it away. See the threat. Set the boundaries. Survive. The avoid tip works by encouraging us to become attuned to our experiences in order to keep intimidation at play — and relationships respectful — rather than oppressive. For those who have perfected the art of navigating the dance of relationships, the Avoidance Tip becomes totem pole central — a mantra 22 assuring us that setting boundaries is a strategic strength, not a sign of weakness, and that, even when intimidated, we must stay the course of establishing boundaries to thrive — emotionally.

Tactics 7

Hoovering

Repeatedly drawing

someone back in a relationship or situation after they've tried to leave

The Subtle Dance of Emotional Tug-of-War *Psychology Impact:*

Hoovering operates along the subtle continuum between manipulation and seduction, and its victims can become entangled in webs of confusion, hope, and at times even guilt as they cycle back into the emotional tug-of-war. The boundaries between their separation and their being drawn back together can become almost illusory.

Manipulative Aspect:

And the clever Hooverer uses intermittent reinforcement as part of the

machinations to pull victims back in after periods of abuse, or after they've separated, rather than some incidental consequence of the larger strategy of manipulation. The dependency-creating aspect comes when the victim struggles to leave because the dynamic pulls him or her back into the relationship, spending periods of connection and affection alternating with periods of mistreatment. The manipulative science behind this is in the manner in which it is used. Hoovering is an emotional dark art. It's more than a simple ploy that brings someone back — it's a strategic attack on their emotional ramshackled ness. For those intimate with the back and forth of attachment, Hoovering teaches about the pull of the rope and how it must be handled. The best way to deal with Hoovering is with a steely resolve to protect oneself and one's emotional freedom.

Roping Laura Back In:

Laura's ex, a narcissist whom she had recently ended a toxic relationship with, had been buttering her up. They sent emails, left notes and text messages, hoping to get her back, but also regretting the pain they had caused and vowing to do everything differently next time. Laura's mind was a vacillating pool of competing hope and anguish. Her confusion and exhaustion drove her to stay. Anyone who takes another drink at this stage understands this phenomenon. Separation becomes blurred since, once again, the partner is saying 'I love you' and is here. Laura was back in her fuzzies, strung out by the trauma bond. Hoovering is an invisible and powerful tool — as Laura's ex-partner demonstrates, it is a calculated plan for recapture. The waves of proclamations of love, attempts at reconciliation, assurances to change, 'l need to start fighting for us' that Laura's ex sent in the hopes of drawing her back were designed to make her feel putty in his hands, keeping him in control — that is, in line with the definition from Social Work today — of her emotions and actions. Hoovering, in other words, is the invisible hand that keeps one stuck in the relationship. It's what keeps us hooked even when we know we should be let go. Laura's chronicles illustrate the danger: they are a mirror that reflects the seductive powers of Hoovering. They also elucidate the desire-joy dynamic, and underscore the need for establishing a strategy. Resistance, self-protection and good counsel become critical in avoiding this emotional tug of war, and remain the keys to navigating this complex dance of hoovering.

Avoidance Strategy:

The Steadfast Resolve The Avoidance Tip from the emotional fortress is the clearest directive: Dig in your heels. If you've decided to leave, re-

engage with why. And don't arrange communication that pulls you back. Rather, stay there for a while, and focus only on you. Stay firm in your resolve is the counteracting stone that shuts the door on Hoover's sneaky psychology. And, if you stay true to your reasons you left and stay loyal and focused on your own wellbeing, then the emotional push-pull has been broken. The tip to avoid is the reminder to stay deeply grounded in a firm commitment to yourself and your own emotional wellbeing. For those quick on the boundary dance, now commanding the two steps back and the spin-away, the Avoidance Tip is the tune they hum to themselves as an anthem: 'Relationships are about commitment, and sticking with it isn't weak — it's just smart.' In Hooverville, the cure falls on the one person who is urgently needed to change; and their path to reinvention lies in self-reliance, freedom — and walking away.

Tactics 8

Shaming

Using criticism or

humiliation to manipulate behavior or self-worth

The Sinister Symphony of Humiliation *Psychology Impact:*

As one of the more sinister notes in the tune of manipulation, Shaming wreaks havoc on its targets' psyche. Victims of shaming experience overwhelm and suffer from strategic assaults on their emotions — self-doubt, self-hatred, self-contempt. The psychic effect, especially on a young, immature mind, can be huge and devastating to the victim's self-image. Manipulative Aspect: The shamer's expert gambit enlists not only systemic erosion of self-regard, but recuperates this self-sorrowing and emotes it, realigning it as a deployment that can be summoned by the manipulator's command. Far from merely a side effect, shaming is enlisted as an intentional lever in the psychology of manipulation. Shaming forms the wedge that cracks open the victim's 'psychological suit of armor' so as to make it ready to become pliable for the alien control of the manipulator. The psychopathology of manipulation lies in the architecture of the emotional humiliation it exploits as a tactic to engineer the topography of vulnerability. Shaming is a dirty trick of emotional strategy — an intent thrown like a grenade into the emotional battlefield, hijacking relationships to become emotional war zones. It's not just that shaming involves meaningful disapproval — it's the careful way it's

designed to target and attack the attacked person's sense of emotional wellbeing. For those stuck in the drama triangle of relationships, learning the subtleties of shaming can be a course in reading an emotional atmosphere and staying grounded in a determination to preserve one's self-worth and emotional health. 28 The Shaming Debacle Emily's colleague fell into the role of the Shamer in their escalating drama. Moving in close, the Shamer cast Emily as the Shamed. Over and over Emily was criticized publicly in front of her colleagues. The Shamer excelled at Shaming when it came to the Shamed's work, undermining both competence and self-worth. Emily felt belittled. She became insecure. She felt unable to speak up at work. She felt held back. The interpersonal drama of Shame now exerted a chilling domination over her internal experience. Shaming worked for Emily's colleague as a strategic move: it targets pride by humiliating the individual in a public way, thus transforming a vulnerable corner in her soul into a discursive battlefield. Shame was a tactic designed to strategically destabilize her self-esteem and create a terrain that is especially susceptible to the force of power; that is, to hinder her professional integrity and autonomy. In the absence of words, shame brought something into her life that made her vulnerable and more controllable. Emily's story illustrates the purpose of the chronicles of shaming: to shed light on the covert process known as shaming at work, to identify emotional abuse, and to put together a strategic plan. Maintaining one's own self-esteem and regulating one's emotions can be a winning strategy in such a dance. Avoidance Strategy: The Citadel of Self-Worth Least favored by far — but very effective — is the Avoidance Tip: be mindful of your self-worth. Know that you are important. Do not allow humiliation or unwarranted criticism to become internalized. Surround yourself with people and experiences that can forge a fortress of self-worth. Whatever you do — shaming, it will not get in. This is the first line of emotional defense in the great developmental strategy game known as the Shrivel and Swell Model, which aims for full seamless integration into the fundamental grounding of our sense of significance as a unique person in a socially interdependent world. This antidote to shame is based on our finally hearing that small still voice within, saying, 'Enough!' Self-worth is an immune system you target against the arrows that 29 tell you you're not good enough. It provides immunity against being dragged down. I call this the 'avoidance tip' because a basic principle of effective emotion regulation is that when you feel stuck and want to escape from emotional pain or discomfort, it helps to commit yourself to a course of action that leads out of the situation.

For those well-practiced in the politics of connection, the Avoidance Tip becomes a mantra, a statement of self-valuation that serves not as an invitation to humility and level-setting but as a strategic virtue. It is an exercise in resistance, an unwavering statement of value that sees you through the shaming experience, maintains your communities of support, and steals your emotional reaction.

Tactics 9

Gaslighting

Invalidating someone's

feelings, memories, or reality to make them doubt themselves

The Manipulative Art of Reality Distortion *Psychological Impact:*

Gaslighting stands out, rather than blending in. With its victims mired in internal doubt and confused acceptance of their own disorientation, gaslighting serves as a discordant chord in the collective orchestra of psychodynamic manipulation. Gone unchecked, sustained gaslighting can seriously undermine the cognitive and emotional functioning of a person. It can result in a type of cognitive dissonance, preventing the victim from identifying the gaslighter as the root cause of his or her problem.
Manipulative Aspect:

The skilled Gaslighter takes steps to undermine the gaslightee's ability to trust their perceptions, memories and feelings. Gaslighting is no accidental byproduct of the master manipulator's stratagem but rather a central element in his strategy. Distortion of reality is the gaslighter's tool meant to put the victim in the position to seek validity in the gaslighter's reality. The manipulative element of gaslighting lies in the employing of reality distortion in order to design a reality in which the victim of gaslighting wins the guessing game of who is insane. As a piece of emotional strategy, gaslighting is the darkest of dark arts: it takes a calculating strike at the psychological heart of another person, turning a relationship into a maze of mental suffering. Perhaps it looks like disagreement — or disbelief — but it goes much further than that: gaslighting is an attempt to undermine a victim's very sense of reality. A lesson, for all you out there trudging through the minefields of relationships, is that learning to live with gaslighters is really a black art: a study of a mind closed and opaque, and a determination to keep your own head innocent. 32 The Fire of Deception: Caught up in what is called

'Gaslighting', Sarah was in the midst of a powerful play of Gerard Manley Hopkins's 'Gaslight Sonnet' (1877), where the manipulative man made 'my substance, dress, or ride' uncertain — even my beliefs, rendered 'uncertain, shadowed, stricken'. Indeed, how do you describe what it means to be Gaslit? Sarah became confused by her emotions, anxious, and had to continually rely on David's version of events, causing her to feel crazy. She also experienced a severe decline in confidence, and a growing sense of emotional and mental instability. Reality distortion was part of David's war strategy. His gaslighting was a way to invalidate Sarah's feelings or memories of things. His goal was to gradually construct a landscape where her sense of reality could be portrayed and manipulated. He was trying hard to make her reliant on his version of reality. Gaslighting was the assassin, the dark force that took away even the smallest sliver of confidence and left her in a state of terror and mind games. The saga might be cautionary, the story of Gaslighting at home reflecting the deadly side of disordered intimacy; it becomes a map to how to spot and how to respond to mental cruelty. The sanity of your own psyche is the best counter to gaslighting, and if you are mired in it, the only way out is to wake up.

Avoidance Strategy:

The Instinctual Sanctuary The cornerstone of that tactical bastion of emotional navigation is the Avoidance Tip: go with your gut. Pay close attention to your experiences of someone denying your reality, your emotions. Keep track if you need to, and get the support of those you trust to reaffirm that what you feel and sense is real — an instinctive safe space in which gaslighting is ineffective. The become-the-boa are the instinctual sense that gaslighters' words often distort your reality, and the confident refusal to let that happen. You've broken free of the gaslight's psychological dread. The avoid instruction is that of commitment to sanity and to your own mental health. 33 For people who can dance that dance, the Avoidance Tip is a mantra: When someone is gaslighting, trust your instincts not as a vulnerability but as a shrewd move. Know when they want to change your reality; know when you need someone to tell you what you think you're seeing; know when you need to be tougher, more resilient, or clearer about how you feel.

Tactics 10

Triangulation

Bringing a third party into

a relationship to create jealousy or insecurity

The Strategic Triangle of Turmoil *Psychological Impact:*

Triangulation is the dissonant note in the carefully calibrated system of emotion manipulation. Its victims live in a claustrophobic terrain of twisted emotions, their jealousy, insecurity and relationship paranoia spiked by a primal sense of competitive rivalry for their partner's attention. This dimension of triangulation can make the resulting neurochemistry even harder to shake than other forms of abuse.

Manipulative Aspect:

While the above describes what is ultimately created by the expert Triangulator, the tears are not accidental: creating the triangle of emotional chaos is part of the strategic manipulation itself. Triangulation allows you to put your victims against each other in competition for your (scarce) attention. You incite jealousy and insecurity in your subjects. You cause too much stress in their respective lives. You make them behave in ways they wouldn't in a normal, healthy environment. You make them more pliant, more obedient, more docile. You can control them more effectively. Manipulative emotional chaos results. As an emotional strategy, triangulation is a dark art: a calculated game that turns relations into zero-sum battlegrounds. The key is not the inclusion of a third, but the pervasive assault on the victim's bedrock of security and sanity. For those mired in the messy maze of relationship dynamics, triangulation offers a lesson in identifying emotional chaos and navigating it, whilst sticking to a continuous course of integrity and value of oneself and one's feelings.

The Deep Triangle:

Lily, an account director in her late thirties whom I will refer to with a pseudonym here, was in the midst of a classic Triangulation sequence. Her mutual friend simultaneously showered her with compliments and spoke derogatorily about her to another one of their circle of friends. Regardless of what was actually said, Lily started to feel directly targeted by a series ofjabs and was rattled by the constant competition for the friend's approval. She became insecure and suspicious of her friends. Her sense of self felt destabilized and it threw her emotional equilibrium. Clearly, Lily's friend was using triangulation as a kind of soft power of control. The tactical play started with creating conflict as a handy mechanism to control dynamics and

influencing perceptions of friendship or allies by creating jealousy, but in the end it is all about control or benefit with far too many edges. Lily's story serves as a warning: any reflection on Triangulation in the sphere of friendship is an indictment of that dynamic, but it also presents opportunities for intervention. By recognising the psycho-emotional problem of Triangulation, we can develop a plan for how to respond to it. How to respond to Triangulation? Protect your own self-worth and internal emotional stability, so you can best navigate the dance of emotional blackmail.

Avoidance Strategy:

The Shield of Open Communication The Avoidance Tip: Keep talking. If someone constantly triangulates you by 'telling others' in an attempt to create tension, raise your concerns directly, clearly. Strategically: answering back minimizes keeping secrets. It means not giving something for someone else to tell, and inviting her to voice concerns directly to you. This keeps communication channels open. If the triangulated person knows what is really going on — knowing keeps people from airing assumptions based on innuendo. And an open communication line is a repelling force for another closing dynamic: the tainting effect of triangulation. 37 'Tipping the people triangle' with open communication deflects the triangles of triangulation. When you are attached to the act of maintaining communication and understanding, you cannot be drawn into the triangles through triangulation. You deflect the triangles of triangulation by 'tipping the people triangle' with open communication. The avoidance tip advises putting an unwavering 'strategic commitment' to maintaining open channels and understanding. For those adept at the relationship waltz, the Avoidance Tip is a mantra — open communication is not a weakness, it is a tactical strength, and in the face of triangulation concerns should be faced out in the open, mutual understanding pursued, and emotional life moved across the dance floor alive and unencumbered.

Tactic 11

Manipulative Flattery

Using excessive

compliments or praise to influence someone's behavior

The Art of Deceptive Adulation *Psychological Impact:*

Manipulative Flattery is more like a false note that slides into the music of the manipulative score, casting a shadow over the emotional life of the flattery victim. For someone who experiences flattery, that form of meaningful behavior appears as if it's accompanied by two meanings: one that inflates positive feelings within the ego; and another that increases the perception of the flattery as being insincere. As a result, the victim's perception of sincerity can become more negative.

Manipulative Aspect:

Manipulative Flattery uses the deployment of praise as pan of a larger strategy. It is not an accidental side effect but a tactic in the larger strategy of manipulation. Flattery is the weapon that is used with the aim to gain sympathy or dominance with the hope of achieving the desired manipulative ends. Emotions serve a manipulative function, by exploiting our behavior through the veneer of a facade of undeserved praise. Manipulative flattery is an emotional strategist's dark art: cynical, calculated, and so much more than empty words. It is a forensic assault on the victim's creativity, a striptease of sincerity and skepticism, a dance of hypocrisy of the highest order. For people trying to maneuver on the slippery slopes of relationships, it is a lesson about paying attention to the signs, and being stalwart about not letting your sense of who you are be used as flattening fuel for someone else's path to power.

Jack's Conundrum:

As the emotional manipulation drama unfolded, Jack felt he was being subjected to a (successful) Manipulative Flattery: although he was flattered excessively, even for subpar work, anyone who experiences this either is swayed by Manipulative Flattery, or becomes suspicious or uncomfortable if the flattery is sincere. Thus, he doubted the sincerity of the compliments. He felt manipulated — was the flattery meant to crop up a favor, or compliance? 40 Manipulative flattery is one of the most masked forms of influence. Jack's colleague attempts to politically influence him by strategic flattery — the multipurpose tactic of overpraising to control the

situation or change someone's behavior or decision. The intention is to get something for something else or, at worst, to gain some form of control or even authority under the covert language of praise. This form of manipulative flattery becomes the unspoken mechanism to erode the distinction between the honest form of praise and the insidious form of influence. Words like compliment, praise and flattery become the tool in manipulative flattery, creating ambiguity and undermining trust and worth. The history of the Jack puzzle is a cautionary tale, a brightly reflecting mirror to Manipulative Flattery at work, an epitome of why it's important to see, and to engage in a strategic response. What to do when faced with manipulative flattery? In the conversation of emotional manipulation, the return to one's own voice, and to healthy emotional selfcare, is essential.

Avoidance Strategy:

The Discerning Shield One arrow in the strategic bow of emotional discernment is the Avoidance Tip: Catch them if you can. Be suspicious of anyone giving you insincere praise. They might want to intimidate you. Avoid the hunches of strangers. Working at a pharmacy for a long time, give yourself away to no one. Then, once you sharpen your weaponry of emotional discernment, look for the straight and true arrow of an authentic compliment. Learn to recognise an arrow that feels genuine in your belly and in your heart, those kinds words, matter. The arrow of authentic praise is your reward for being suspicious of all the shady flattery frothing beneath manipulation and self-interest. Considering it as an emotional strategy, then, the irony of the evasion tactic is that it entrusts the indiscriminate and reactive person with the ability to be discriminating. By noticing the clues to insincerity, and believing in your own worth without feeling the need to test it against others' apparent approbation, you become less susceptible to manipulation. The evasion tip is an invitation to an ongoing, heightened vigilance to preserve integrity and the contours of your emotional life. To be discriminating is to be discriminating — in short, to be alert to your own emotional life. 41 Even for those versed in the art of the dance of relating, this Avoidance Tip has become a mantra — proof that discrimination isn't a liability but a strategic asset: if other people' s flattery is insincere, yours will love you back.

Tactic 12

Playing the Victim

Portraying oneself as the
victim to garner sympathy or avoid responsibility

The Strategic Masquerade *Psychological Impact:*

Playing the Victim is a powerful piece of theater, designed to cast shadows on the emotional stage of the victim's mind. The person being manipulated — even if unconsciously — feels guilty, feels responsible, and feels driven to provide help. A neat piece of psychological trickery entails that the victim will feel responsible for the dynamics that enslave her.

Manipulative Aspect:

The knowing player of Victimizing doesn't end up wearing the proverbial victim's costume. It does not come as a side effect but as a deliberate element of a bigger strategy of subjection. Victimizing is the disguise that endows playing the manipulation game with prestige, immunity, sympathy and tactical excuses. What is hidden behind the ostentation of emotions, is an alibi vis-å-vis accountability. It is this active element of victims that makes it a form of manipulation. Victim-playing is a piece of emotional dark arts — a game move that turns interaction into a manipulation of response and blame. It isn't so much an expression of distress as a strategic attack on the victim's sense of responsibility. If you're venturing into relationship territory, it's important to know your victim work. It's about discerning what you'd be banging a tambourine across and making a show of leaving church for. Once you know these things, then maybe it's time to put on your finest Hungarian shoes and be a jeweler and do your victory parade. It's also about discerning where you might be the hindrance yourself. Finally, above all else, it's about keeping your own boundaries and being kind to yourself.

The Encounter:

So, there was Emily, led by the nose through a series of tableaus in the psychological drama called Playing the Victim, a kind of dance she'd been drawn into by a friend who presented herself as the victim of everything 44 For years, her friend attempted to elicit sympathy for her grievances while simultaneously avoiding responsibility. The effect on her was to make Emily feel guilty, conflicted and increasingly responsible for her. This shadow, to use a Jungian term, was like a weight bearing down on her friendship. Her friend used playing the victim as a tactic to manipulate. The move was a calculated one: spontaneous victims who cry 'poor me' and 'you wouldn't understand' to stymie criticism. In targeting a victim's mindset, the strategic victim wears the mask of the injured party and ingratiates herself to others by claiming that her

pain is greater than her partner's, even if it's unfounded. Her pain is more heartfelt, more tragic. By playing the role of the victim, the calculating one can circumvent accountability, and manipulate the narrative to suit the relationship script she has chosen. She is the arbiter of her own reality. Playing the victim was the silent killer that paved the way for an emotional tug of war between them. The Emily saga is, then, a parable of sorts, an Elizabethan-style glassite held up to the face of Playing the Victim in friendship — a putting-on display that teaches us to see through it, and to respond accordingly. In a situation where Playing the Victim is at play, holding on to your own boundaries and to your own emotional space is your best strategy.

Avoidance Strategy:

The Validation Prism One of the strategic tips for the stalwart fortress of emotional navigation is the Avoidance Tip — Validate! Validate! Validate! Carry the burden of emotions but question consistent victimization statements — healthy interactions involve two people being accountable and responsible instead of one person playing the consistent victim-scapegoat role. The strategic move is to create a validation prism where emotions get carried but claims of consistent victimization slip through the cracks. Likewise, invalidation experiences are the armor plating used when faced with the victimizing claims of the manipulator. Look under the microscope of consistent victim claims and reciprocal responsibility, and you liberate yourself. The avoidance cure is the command to maintain self-defense and repair that will ensure consistent emotional integrity. 45 For those who have mastered the footwork of relationship politics, the Avoidance Tip is both beacon and motto — a reminder that validation is not at odds with refusal but a tactical benefit. To be preempted heals the chronic emotional injuries of feeling invalidated with striking efficiency. The art is to welcome feelings, to mingle with dynamic moral environments.

Tactic 13

Withholding Information

Deliberately keeping

information to maintain control or power

The Veil of Secrecy *Psychological Impact:*

Withholding Information — one of the notes — is the allusively

sinister shadow that appears to be missing from the soundtrack of this score of control. Those who experience its insidious effects don't know what they don't know, and they experience confusion, frustration and anxiety as a result. And, in a less immediate sense, their way of knowing must also be affected.

Manipulative Aspect:

Withholding Information is rarely an unfortunate side-effect of the manipulation of anger but one of its very strategies. Information becomes the target of manipulation. Key details are left concealed, not because it's impossible to share them, but because that concealment is part of the manipulation. Crucially, the key to the stagecraft of Withholding Information is its ability to keep the victim stuck in dependency upon the manipulator by hiding critical knowledge. Withholding Information gives power to the manipulator. This is manipulation. Withholding information in the context of emotional strategy is a dark art — a deliberate volte-face that transforms an interaction into a fraught and prolonged act of infiltration, of domination by the selectively unavailable. It is not the lust for keeping details to oneself but an aggressive operation by the enemy on the victim's ability to live her own life.

Informational Deception:

Chris encountered a form of emotional abuse played out across the Withholding Information step: Maybe the 'team' was purposefully not given a critical piece of information about a project. Or someone is given a piece but not the whole picture. This might be for good reason. Yet, anytime someone holds back information either intentionally or unintentionally, it can wreak havoc. People start feeling undermined, and then they become unsure of what’s going on. Trust suffers. 48 Chris employed withholding information as a deliberative tactic of control. The tactic involved withholding crucial information, the goal of which would probably be to strengthen his own position of power and control over the group's actions and decisions. The group would be forced to depend on Chris for critical information, and Chris would become indispensable. Withholding information is the dark force that blurs the boundaries between transparency and secrecy and pulls groups into a net of control. In this respect, the Chris chronicles might serve as a counterpoint — an important reflection of what Withholding Information in teams can look like, when it's at its worst, and why it's worth trying to see the tango, and work out a strategy in response. When people are withholding information around you, increasing your agency and maintaining transparency can be the key to escaping the painful tango.

Avoidance Strategy:

The Transparency Beacon In the master tactician's control center for optimizing emotional efficacy, the Avoidance Tip shines its most clarifying light: share information. Share. Share. Share. Information sharing is as important in beneficial relationships as it is in dysfunctional ones. You don't need to share everything with everyone — you aren't an accountant, after all — but if someone in your life is in the habit of keeping all the marbles hidden in an opaque container, state your need for transparency, and ask for specifics. You might want to be a little clearer in the message than 'Honey, I need you to be more transparent,' but you get the idea. Make transparency your torchlight, and place it in the shadows cast by the manipulative: information-withholding polemics. As part of her emotional strategy, you can strive for transparency to counterattack the information gambit of stonewalling. As part of her transparency gambit, she is at pains to communicate her need for openness, calling you out on your stonewalling so to speak, calling for clarity — all the while making it clear that she can see you're trying to manipulate to avoid a conflict conversation. The avoidance gambit triggers the avoidance tip. The avoidance tip, in turn, is calling us to commit to a practice of defending our own agency and transparency in relationships. 49 For masters of the game, the Avoidance Tip conveys a mantra: sharing is not exposing but savvy strategy. Preventing people from letting the cat out of the bag is more effective than trying to prevent them from simply bagging the cat.

Tactic 14

Financial Control

Controlling someone's

finances to maintain power in the relationship

Pulling Purse Strings *Psychological Impact:*

Financial Control is one tune in a production of musical manipulation. As a consequence, those who are kept in this state of controlled autonomy, experience a mix of feelings of entrapment, dependency, and a sense of violation of their right to financial autonomy. Psychological dependence may develop, and a scar on their own independence may ensue, although one person's idea of independence and another person's idea may differ.

Manipulative Aspect:

Financial control is sharpened and tightened not necessarily as a consequence, but as a part of the total strategy of manipulation. Control of the

finances becomes the instrument through which the independence of the victim becomes restricted, and dependence on the manipulator is created. As far as manipulation is concerned, control is predominantly focused on the financial leveraging, and so we can define manipulation as an uncaring process first of all. Financial stewardship becomes an underhanded art, an overweening tactic of control, a savvy money-manipulation that restyles the relationship into a dance of restriction and dependence. For those who are attempting to traverse the challenging landscape of relationship issues, the implications of financial control can provide a helpful clue as to the nature of the dance — and how to stay focused in maintaining your own financial health and self-worth.

Sarah 's Struggle:

In terms of the emotional abuse process model, Sarah was the victim of Financial Control, at the hands of her partner, who not only controlled all money and limited her access to money and financial independence, but with which she felt she'd got little choice other than to stay with her partner, be financially dependent on him, and have little power in the relationship other than emotional. The psychological impact was clear: freedom of choice is the power of financial autonomy. 52 Sarah's partner cleverly employed financial control as a way of sending a clear message — 'don't mess with me or I'll take away your money, and that will see you, and your needs, suffer.' The essentially subtle manipulation combined financial management with power and control, so Sarah was left feeling obliged to and dependent on her partner. Withholding money was the 'silent' communication that blurred the boundary between financial management and financial violence. This narrative is thus a cautionary tale — a mirror held up to reveal the ' Financial Control Two-Step' in the relationship realm, and a reminder to remain alert to the dance, to the dance steps, if we are to respond strategically. The answer to financial control is financial independence. In a dance of finance and emotion, your own financial independence and a balance between you will keep the dance going. Avoidance Strategy: The Financial Independence Sentinel It is the Emotional Navigation Strategy that comes to your side at this strategic fortress: Avoidance Tip: Don't let them control the money. Guard your financial independence. Be aware of 'shared financial decisions'. What they really are. Talk about these decisions and have clear limits if any Set up a 'financial independence sentry' to protect your financial independence and your ability to discuss 'shared financial decisions' honestly. Preserving financial

independence forms the backbone of emotional strategy. Keeping resources uncoupled andote to manipulate motives of financial control. The avoidance tip instead encourages a steadfast determination to preserve financial autonomy and promote financial equality. For those adept at the relationship tango, the Avoidance Tip is a mantra: financial independence is not something you should fear, it's a tactical asset. Financial control goes hand in hand with becoming a sentinel over your financial independence — and navigating through the emotional landscape with fortitude and clarity.

Tactic 15

Emotional Blackmail

Threatening or

manipulating someone by leveraging their emotions.

Emotional Coerciveness *Psychological Impact:*

Emotional Blackmail is the minor key in this assembly-line of guilt and obligation. In Emotional Blackmail, victims are playing host to a symphony of terror and guilt, and they are complying because if they don't it will make the manipulator feel bad, maybe even leave. Even worse, they are afraid to complain in the face of these manipulations as they would feel guilty for complaining. The emotional damage echoes for years.

Manipulative Aspect:

Here, the expert Emotional Blackmailer has taken a coercive emotional score and raised them to a powerful symphony. Far from being an incidental effect, it's a carefully applied gambit in the escalating strategy of manipulation. Emotional Blackmail has become the blackmail, and the power of the emotional blackmailer lies in the banking of affect so it can be strategically deployed to manipulate behavior. The manipulation now rests in the use of emotion as a banked currency. Emotional blackmail is an emotional strategy with all the finesse of its better-feeling counterpart and a sinister beauty of its own: morally oblique and sometimes hard to discern, emotional blackmailers transform the intimacy of a relationship into a gauntlet of coercion and compliance. It is not enough to turn oneself inside out in the service of an argument. It is a sustained emotional assault. It is a lesson in recognizing the kind of musical score that power and control plays out to, should you find yourself perched on that knife-edge of relationship life, balancing on the imaginary fulcrum that is emotional blackmail.

Sue's Devilish Games:

The story of the manipulation is a drama that unfolds as one of the authors of Emotional Blackmail, Sue, manipulates the other, David, into doing her illegal gambling. To motivate David to comply with her wishes, Sue threatens to end the friendship. 55 The manipulation works on David because it induces in him feelings of anxiety, guilt and pressure. In particular, the scare tactic of 'I'll end the friendship with you, if you don't …' generates in him the emotion of obligatory obedience. Sue practiced emotional blackmail with great finesse. The strokes were calculating. She threatened David's feelings to make him do as he wanted. She dangled the continuation of an important relationship as leverage over his actions and he will so that he will be stuck in the grip of successive emotional blackmails, where if he doesn't comply, she will hold his illegal actions over his head. The Sue saga is a cautionary tale, the mirror upon which one can better see the perils of Emotional Blackmail in a friendship and the importance of being properly attuned to the coercive music and knowing how best to respond. It is the emotional wellbeing of the self that will determine how to proceed when the music strikes up the minor chord of emotional blackmail.

Avoidance Strategy:

The Recognition Fortress The Avoidance Tip: Recognize emotional manipulation. When you feel captain and crew steering right, remember this: emotionally skilled manipulators use others' feelings against them. In conditions of poor emotional recognition, the captain and crew might become stunned, outraged or depressed when affected by the machinery of their manipulators. So, the strategic move is to cultivate a recognition fortress, your jagged shield of emotional boundaries. Erect barriers and defenses along your emotional perimeter. Block and deflect the projectiles of your manipulators' nasty machines. You might try these emotionally articulate air raid sirens or other counter lifts: 'I don't see it the way you are explaining it. "1'm not sure that's what's happening. "This situation makes me feel uncomfortable but I don't know exactly why. "it's difficult for me to understand.' Or consider this legion of friendly Warthog Warhawks to tackle and jam the emotional levers of psychological power:' Let's leave emotional issues out of this analysis. 'It's obvious that you are emotional about this decision as well. "Everyone has different ways of feeling. ' 'I get the sense that you may not be being totally honest with us.' The strategic move is to raise an awareness fortress along your emotional battlements and to blunt this form of assault. 56 Awareness of emotional manipulation becomes the umbrella that keeps off the rain of

emotional blackmail, since manipulation can be called out, and then the floodwaters recede. The avoidance tip Art of change and manage the boundary sets a determination to protect your emotional health and keep your boundaries, and to persevere in that however necessary. For others, adept at the relational waltz, the Avoidance Tip is a mantra: It's no paranoia that you're recognized; it's a matter of emotional recognition being an immensely useful strategic tool for the avoidant. For when blackmail is emotional, your emotional borders are the best warding off post — and you, the most accurate beacon when the mental compass points to your emotional danger zone.

Tactic 16

Narcissistic Manipulation

Using manipulation to feed

one's own ego or sense of superiority

The Dominion of Ego *Psychological Impact:*

Narcissistic Manipulation, in the grand orchestral finale of manipulation that the individual experiences, is a loud shout of power over the many inferior, devalued and insecure others, leaving the victim subjected to its effects with a sense of emotional frame being broken, reduced to a mere tool in their superiority complex. In essence, the effect of narcissistic abuse is a lasting effect on the self to be of low worth.

Manipulative Aspect:

Control of the ego-realm is part of the grand strategy of the manipulator who is expert at Narcissistic Manipulation. Rather than being a side effect, narcissistic manipulation becomes the path to achieving control and power over others for it is through their very vivification in ego-reality that the manipulator's own ego and feelings of grandiosity are fed and nourished. The manipulative element of the process of narcissistic manipulation is the instrumental use of other people like instruments in the music of the manipulator's own grandiosity. At the emotional level, it is a kind of dark art, a way of making narcissistic demands reconfigure relationships into a traumatic dance of dominance and fealty: it is not only an insistence on being better but an emotional assault on one's very existence. To those engaged in the labyrinths of attachment, the lesson is this: we can learn to regard manipulation — as manifested by the narcissist — as the dictatorship

of ego, and by remaining firmly rooted in our own self-esteem and self-care, we can learn to negotiate its landmines.

Mark's Dominance:

Mark moved quickly into the orchestration of a narcissistic group dynamic. He dominated most of the conversation, cut off contributors to the discussion and made it primarily about everything he wanted to say. He sought ongoing admiration from people, and upon not receiving it, he responded negatively. His entreaties to be seen as confident and credible involved a deep form of narcissistic manipulation. As he became the primary voice in the group, others felt less competent, less heard, and their confidence dropped along with their contributions. Mark's narcissistic manipulation began casting a shadow on the cohesiveness and flow of the group. Mark constantly subjected us to narcissistic manipulation, which does precisely as it sounds: it feeds one's ego and demonstrates superiority. The move was a highly orchestrated construction of dialogue: denying, dominating or discarding everyone's ideas. He built a world where agreement with him would be an obvious and rational course of action, and not challenging that position would be seen as a completely normal way to react. Popular forms of narcissistic manipulation blur the line between cooperation and servitude: they make groups feel enmeshed in a world of disempowerment. The story of the Mark dominance is a cautionary tale, a mirror for the dynamics of Narcissistic Manipulation in group situations, a reminder of the role of ego stakes that suggests a strategy to cope with narcissistic manipulation: taking care of one's own narcissist is the way to keep the dance of emotional manipulation.

Avoidance Strategy:

Learning the Patterns The tactical signal of emotional navigation is the Avoidance Tip: look for patterns. Look for people who consistently present as superior or who consistently attempt to manipulate outcomes. Seek out people with whom to talk about it, people who will actively listen and validate your experience. Tactically, it is to create a pattern monitoring system that can be trained to identify manipulation patterns and to actively cultivate a supportive environment. 60 In the emotional strategy narrative, awareness of patterns is the shield that protects against the aggressive takeover of narcissistic abuse. If you can look out for demonstrated superiority and carefully build a circle of allies, you can break out of the web of control. The avoidance tip is an invitation to adopt a strong commitment to maintaining the wellbeing of yourself and your connections. The Avoidance Tip is an affirmation of what

successful relationship navigators already know: that discernment is often confused with paranoid delusion, but is actually a source of power against narcissism's manipulations. Stay vigilant. Keep an eye on your emotional perimeter. Pattern-match. Feel agile and smart as you shift your stance in the ever-changing elements of the emotional landscape.

Tactic 17

False Promises

Making commitments with

no intention of following through

The Illusionary Pact *Psychological Impact:*

False Promises are one of its more common and ephemeral tunes; casual yet calculated and discordant, they feed through the hallways of disillusionment, lack of faith and dis-trust. The tune of False Promises is damaging psychologically because 'the manipulation will be "stored" in the victim's trust-system'. Just think about your own response when your expectations aren't met.

Manipulative Aspect:

The skilled False Promises person makes an imaginary contract. Not an aftereffect, but a deliberate ploy in the larger strategy of subterfuge. It is precisely because of this intent that False Promises become a device to create false hope or expectation, thereby keeping the target in the game or following along. The manipulative aspect of this ploy is that the perpetrator utilizes the false promise as a cover, a smokescreen to conceal the true agenda. Tactical fictions in the realm of emotion are dark arts — 'commit phobic' maneuvers that turn living together into a narrative of promise and its abrupt, systematic destruction. It has nothing to do with being asked out: we are talking about a strategic attack on the victim 's faculty of trust. It is, for those trying to negotiate the dangerous equatorial zone of relationships, the way to glimpse the mirage of the false promise and still keep your oath to yourself.

The Promissory Betrayal:

When it comes to emotional abuse, Sarah got caught in a False Promise contract her boss was designing all along. Month after month, the boss said he was going to make her director and, month after month, he did not. When a boss has schemed a False Promise contract, as in these examples, what happens is two-fold. First, on the supply side, every time the boss says

he is going to do something, the promise feels real. He follows through on the promise infrequently, if ever. 63 What happens on the demand side? He disappoints the employee. He leaves her feeling frustrated — so at odds with what should be going on according to her preferred reality model. He undermines her trust in him. He stars in a script she had hoped wouldn't include an ending with him but now anticipates has been written already: a contracted script in which she now is made to bear disillusionment, disappointment and disengagement from the workplace. Sarah's boss expertly used false promises as a lethal tactic. The covert tactic relied on the making of false promises. Consider the following pattern: Person A makes a commitment to Person B, expecting that Person B will rely on the promise. Person B accepts the promise and waits for the outcome. Person A does not keep the promise. Person A then makes another promise, with similar implications to the first promise. The cycle of possible false promises is repeated at regular intervals. The intent to manipulate was present from the beginning of the pattern. It served the self-interest and the power of one person (Person A) towards the compliance or cooperation of the other (Person B). That's the manipulation. False promises became the shadowy and covert behavior that distinguished between genuine commitments and cynical arrangements, leading Person B to encounter the dynamic of hope and disappointment. The Sarah story is a warning, a kind of mirror held up to show how False Promises can work their insidious magic between people at work. And what to do about it? Realize you've come to an unreal pact — and consider your options. When False Promises are at play, maintaining belief in yourself and in where you are can be the critical factor in managing the dance.

Avoidance Strategy:

The Action Validator The second, pragmatic tip for this stage in the strategic castle is called the Emotional Avoidance Tip. This tip pertains to determination: one needs to test words against deeds. Much like virtuous feelings need to be balanced and monitored, words, promises and assurances need testable commitments — deeds — to validate that promises align with one' s history. It's part of the strategic fortification rule to find an action validator — to take words as less valid until validated by a deed. The ideal, healthy relationship covers a range of strong feelings and moods such as trust, reliability, and consistent follow-through rather than, I promise! 64 The third strategic tip, or Emotional Avoidance Tip, challenges us to take the enormous challenge of anger, turn it into a strategist training exercise, and thus produce a strong, resilient friend to whom we can turn. Verification is a shield that

blunts the force of false promise in the armory of emotional strategy. For a promise to be true, checking to see whether it fits the pattern of past actions frees you from an entire constellation of false promises. The avoidance tip is a call to maintain a commitment to your own psychological hygiene — to call your own bluff, and keep others from calling it. For those skilled at the relationship tango, the Avoidance Tip is the dance floor: actions trump words, lies emerge, and deception leaps if signs, sounds, steps and songs dictate it all. As such, the Avoidance Tip is revelation. Always check with how you feel.

Tactic 18

Stonewalling

Refusing to engage or

communicate as a way to manipulate

The Silent Citadel *Psychological Impact:*

Stonewalling is a silent fortress in this symphony of manipulation that reverberates with frustrated deafness and helplessness. Victims become entrapped in this psychological trap of silence, which puts communication on hold but the effects persist. As communication is the medium glue that maintains our relationships (and society at large), the effect can be devastating to one's sense of belonging.

Manipulative Aspect:

The master Stonewaller builds his own castle of silence. The silence is not an unintended side-effect but part of the strategy. Samurai psychologists, like children and abusers, use Stonewalling to either manipulate or punish. In either case, it's the handing out of silence, the withholding of human connection, that forces the victim into a position of diminished power. The manipulative element here is that silence is used as a weapon. It is a way of hurting the human heart and expressing your power against them. Stonewalling is a dark art of emotionally strategic behavior. Its purpose is not just to break off a conversation, but to insert oneself into a broad set of relational dynamics that split the other, demonize them, punish them, give them no control — and in all of these ways, make them into someone with whom one can have no relationship in the short or long term. If you're trying to weave through the labyrinth of a relationship, learning to be stonewalling-wise entails learning that the silent citadel mustn't be feared but engaged with, from a resolve to preserve and protect your own connection.

The Silent Treatment:

In the drama that is emotional abuse, Emily suddenly became captive of her partner's silent citadel. After a disagreement with him, he stopped talking to her, refused to talk about the issue, or otherwise 'stonewalled' her. She felt helpless, anxious and excluded from his emotional world. 67 The silence rendered her unable to resolve conflicts or communicate freely in the relationship. Emily's partner used stonewalling to control her. The calculated move to 'not talk' created an atmosphere of emotional abandonment. By refusing to talk they were attempting to manipulate Emily's emotions and behaviors. The silent fortress of stonewalling became the strategic castle of control, where ultimate authority was maintained while being shrouded in no-responsibility. The intervention was designed to keep Emily trapped in a state of victimhood. The chronicles of the Emily silence are first and foremost a cautionary tale, and a mirror reflecting the silent citadel and its corrosive but easily remedied insidiousness within relationships. It is also a blueprint for action. In the dance of stonewalling, auto-logical connection and emotional self-care become the very thread that holds the connection together.

Avoidance Strategy:

The Dialogue Architect The Avoidance Tip is: Emotionally, take action: open communication and problem-solving. When communication issues come up or personal conflicts arise, there is often a need to talk them over and figure out the conflicts in a respectful way if possible. Good relationships involve a fair amount of talking back and forth. A strategic move is to help yourself and your kid become a dialogue architect who builds bridges for communication and tears down barriers. In the canvas of emotional strategy, encouraging discussion casts a tide that washes away the maneuvers of the stonewaller. Admit and face communication-centered issues; build a bridge to bring back a community of rooting through modeling mutual respect and resolution. The avoidance power tip is an ask to develop a steadfast resolve in protecting your own connection and emotional integrity. Only if you are well-practiced in the intimate balance of dance relations can the Avoidance Tip become an edict, 'Build bridges through dialogue.' When confronted with stonewalling, when you feel cold and alone in the middle of a temper tantrum, hold the line of your emotional perimeter, build bridges emotionally, and walk through the conversation clearly and surely.

Tactic 19

Negging

Giving backhanded

compliments or criticism to undermine confidence

The Art of Subtle Erosion *Psychological Impact:*

Negging is the mole in the wall — a slow entropy, in which words lose their meanings, the most beautiful things become 'ugly' and less than nothing, single words take on multiple meanings, and everything begins to seem grotesquely imbued with sex — or in this case,sexually charged with degradation. The goal is to lure the subject into that hall of mirrors giving off mixed signals: I like you but I don't; you're hot but there's something that turns me off about you. If you pick me up you're a jerk; if you don't, I think you don't like me. These plunging shafts, and the dripping of self-doubt that coats you, are weakening your defenses — rendering you unable to see things clearly. The goal is to make you feel confused, stupid, insecure, unlikeable, unworthy of love. And Of sex. Once in this space — tiny at the outset, growing with each Weighing push--you not only come to believe the Negster's verbal comments, you begin to internalize them entirely.

Manipulative Aspect:

The good Negster detracts through attrition. It's a strategy, not an outcome. The attrition is part of the bigger strategy of taking someone down. It's not enough to Neg. You need to take someone down. The mechanism by which you take someone down is by bringing them down. You diminish their confidence so that they will make themselves more vulnerable to you. The manipulation is what you do when you use the subtle negative as a weakness. You use the subtle negative as a way of making them open to your desires. Again, the manipulation is something that you're doing; using the subtle negative as a weakness. The dark art of negging is as much an emotional strategy as a series of persuasive techniques: it plays pretend to soften the otherwise harsh nature of the rescue, turning relationships into duplicitous negotiations in which the dance of partnership actually signifies a Machiavellian game in which each victim is taken down with toy sabers. It is a tactical onslaught on the self that is just as deliberate as it is disguised. For everyone who's ever failed at falling in love, or stayed in love with someone who never tried, or suffered the sting of a rejection, or been deemed 'un-loveable', the path through these safeguards in pursuit of 70 the sweet inner peace of self-worth seems clear. Ignore, and thereby reject the message that you don't deserve to be treated well. Nip negging in the bud.

Ultimate Backhandedness:

John was being subtly Snapchatted with a neg as he fell into the full storyline of the emotional vampirism his friend had been subtly catalyzing: 'Can you believe that really big loser got a scholarship to that school? Not you, of course, you're so much better!' Good grief. By undermining John's confidence through subtle erosion, they aimed to manipulate his perception of himself. Negging became the silent force that blurred the lines between genuine encouragement and strategic manipulation, leaving John entangled in a web of insecurity. John's friend had attempted to use negging as a form of gaslighting. By offering themed disses couched as compliments, by constantly sowing seeds of doubt ever so slightly, they were trying to influence John's perceptions about himself through the slow degradation of their confidence. And negging was the dark driving force behind it all, making it easier to confuse the notions of sincere encouragement and strategic undermining, causing John to tip-toe between insecurity. In that way, like any good John dilemma, the Negging chronicles become a mirror. By recognizing Negging and all its subtle corrosive power, maybe we can start to respond. The key, in the face of Negging, to staying true to yourself and — instead of relying on others for validation — finding it within.

Avoidance Strategy:

The Authenticity Sentinel The Avoidance Tip from the buddy in the bunker of emotional navigation is to watch out for manipulation. Watch out for disguised criticisms masking as compliments. Watch out and respect real and useful feedback, while looking for disguised insults. The strategic move is: develop an authenticity watchdog that screens in the authentic compliments and feedback from real friends, and filters out the disguised manipulations. 71 Recognizing manipulation becomes your psychic shield to ward off negging, tip number two. Don't just listen for evidence of backhanded compliments, watch out for 'disguised criticism' as well, and trust the feedback that feels authentic. Avoidance tip number three is an explicit call to fostering 'a commitment to not always accommodating the other', as a way to fight the erosion of subtle undermining. For those who've learned how to survive social minefields, the Avoidance Tip becomes a mantra — a reminder that being true to yourself is key to all authentic encounters. When it comes to deflecting the neggers, what you really need to develop is a vigilance for maintaining your emotional boundaries, for picking up on manipulations that trample them, and for moving through society with confidence and clarity.

Tactic 20

Overwhelm

Bombarding someone with

demands or tasks to control or exhaust them.

The Continuous Onslaught *Psychological Impact:*

Overwhelm, however, is the kaleidoscopic choose-your-own-adventure strategy, a tour-de-force of controlling stress, anxiety and fatigue, an 'I-can't-cope-anymore' shadow that darkens one's thoughts and feelings. Victims have neither the energy nor the time to argue about deadlines and commitments, or try to push back. Instead, they are simply pulled along by a rip-tide of demands. The victim feels psychologically worn-down and scarred.

Manipulative Aspect:

The skillful user of the Tactical Onslaught — the tactic of overwhelm — utilizes unreasonable demands or requests (in the case of macro overwhelm) strategically. It is no accident or side-effect, but is used as a tactic to compel compliance or submission by inducing a state of helplessness. The artfulness of overwhelm as a form of manipulation arises in its strategic utilization of unreasonable demands or requests in a manner calculated to induce a state of helplessness and compliance or submission. Even more than stress, overwhelm, in emotion management, is a tactic: it's a kind of scorched-earth campaign that turns relationships into a war zone of constant tiresome demands. Whether amid tumultuous love, marriage or friendship, it is the lesson of the art of overwhelm for the damned and the doomed. The jaundiced practice of savvy career-making is a lesson in gauging the tactical barrage of a steamroller, and a desperate commitment to self-preservation that will keep one afloat in buoyant waters of breezy wit and effortless banter.

The Corporate Conundrum:

Sarah became the embodiment of the pain suffered by Overwhelm, her manager's tactic in the emotional game. She was assigned ever more tasks and unrealistic deadlines. And Overwhelm took over — personified by Sarah feeling hassled, stressed and panicky, as her sense of ability to cope was increasingly undermined by the ever-present suffocating masses of tasks getting done or not done, getting done on time or not, screaming in her head. In other words, Sarah's manager was using overwhelm as a control tactic. A purposeful barrage of too much to do was a way of rendering her work subordinate to him. The overwhelm tactic was a hypnotic release valve meant

to pressure a subordinate to fulfill their boss's labor goals, or deplete worker energy to the point of defeat. The therapist who interviewed Sarah depicted this tactic of overwhelm as the unspoken power force within the workplace. It was not about work, but rather a strategic tension tactic. The Sarah soap operas become a moral fable, a mirror held up to reveal, in professional life, the instrumentality of Overwhelm and the call for a strategic response; the need to have a defense against it, and keep your own integrity intact. In the face of overwhelm, a major part of boundary-keeping becomes keeping your sanity.

Avoidance Strategy:

Cultivating Boundaries Pay attention to your boundaries and start setting limits. Notice when requests go beyond healthy effort and set some boundaries. Prioritize and declare your limits to prevent burnout. Navigating the overwhelming landscape requires a mastery of setting boundaries. Cultivate self-awareness to discern when demands exceed healthy limits. Actively set limits and prioritize tasks based on importance and urgency. Communicate these boundaries clearly to manage expectations and prevent the imposition of excessive demands. This proactive approach not only safeguards mental and emotional wellbeing but also fortifies resistance against manipulation. In the intricate game of life, overwhelm may attempt to tip the scales, but armed with the knowledge of setting boundaries, individuals can become empowered players, capable of managing demands while maintaining equilibrium. This tactical guide serves as a roadmap to navigate the overwhelm battlefield, ensuring individuals emerge victorious and in control of their own narrative.

Tactic 21

Selective Amnesia

Pretending to forget

important events or promises to manipulate a situation

The Narrative Distortion *Psychological Impact:*

Selective Amnesia is a false script in this orchestrated production of gaslighting. It is a shadow that can obscure the truth, causing a kind of bewilderment, a feeling of confusion, a sense of frustration and self-doubt that can permeate the mind of the victim. The cognitive impact of this form of manipulation can be quite traumatic. The victim can begin to question his or

her own reality, thinking: 'Did such-and-such event really happen, or am I simply going crazy?'

Manipulative Aspect:

The skillful practitioner of Selective Amnesia, the crafting of fake history, can even play off the trick within the story: feigning forgetfulness of something critical to the story that favors him. This then is not simply an involuntary consequence but a calculated step; Selective Amnesia becoming a way through which he avoids consequences, or his keeping of promises becomes a way through which he can change the story in his favor. The manipulation is in a calculated forgetting that transforms an environment that magically converts hard reality into something malleable. Emotionally, Selective Amnesia functions as a kind of dark art — a strategically selective assault on reality that reconstitutes an entire relationship as a labyrinth of overlapping narratives and compelling self-delusions. For individuals caught up in the emotional complexities of relationships, Selective Amnesia offers a primer in the challenges of negotiating interpretive distortion with a firm attachment to reconstructive veracity, as well as maintaining one's emotional health in the process.

Intentional Forgetfulness:

Mike was using the Selective Amnesia rope to tighten the manipulation spiral, tying off the tums with a bow of humiliation. And beyond embarrassment, there was frustration, doubt, and lingering questions about Mike's state of mind. His colleagues would ask him for a key critical project, but he had feigned inattention. He actually forgot. And as a result, they had to scramble. Many others would encounter the same frustrations. They'd doubt Mike's reliability. They'd doubt whether we should trust his commitments for other projects. Mike used Selective Amnesia as a strategic tactic — one he mastered over time — to disadvantage them. He would smooth over that which he didn't want to happen; sometimes he simply would forget a promise he'd made, or a project he said he'd do; he would pivot from a conversation others initiated. he began to reorganize people's narratives so that they were favorable to him as he slipped away. But it was more than mere forgetfulness: it was a maneuver to control the narrative. The Mike story is a warning, a grim mirror to the way that Selective Amnesia operates within relationships — and the criteria by which we may need to strategize our response. If we're on the receiving end of selective deletion, the real challenge, perhaps, is to retain our faith in our own reliability.

Avoidance Strategy:

The Documentation Expert Here is one of the three strategic forts of emotional navigation: the Avoidance Tip: Document important details. Write things down if you can, and refer back to those notes later if important details or promises are otherwise ' forgotten', as a form of strategic self-protective vigilance. This is like creating a documentation sentinel, initiating a systems form of guardianship amidst the barrage of narrative distortion. Recording is the emotional strategy that defends against the Selective Amnesia tactics. When you record what's important, you become the master of forgetting illusions, and you build forts of clear vision. The avoidance rule is an invitation to develop rock-solid commitment to stick to your own commitments and to navigate social worlds with resilience and insight. 78 For the skilled at tracing that 'dance of death and birth' in the realm of interpersonal politics, the Avoidance Tip takes on the status of a mantra — in the face of Selective Amnesia, 'Document or die.' When trust in obligations is assaulted by Selective Amnesia, the work to remember involves standing guard against one's trust in the commitments, seeing the falsification of the narrative, engaging in the interpersonal politics of social space with clarity and resilience.

Tactic 22

Emotional Manipulation

Using emotions to control

or influence someone's behavior

The Intricate Dance of Control *Psychological Impact:*

Emotional Manipulation was part of this stage orchestration: it was the dance of control and victims said that they became 'marionettes' where the strings were used to manipulate their emotions, the victim's mind overpowered with emotional exhaustion, confusion and control.

Manipulative Aspect:

For the skilled contemporary Emotional Manipulator who is aware of this dynamic, who is choreographing the requisite dance, emotion is not conjured up through artful maneuvering, it's the substance being skillfully manipulated towards a particular outcome. Emotion is the choreographer's tool to fabricate a story, systematically using emotions to control outcomes or behavior, such that it leads to the benefit of the manipulator. Emotional Manipulation is the strategic use of emotional exploitation to fabricate

superior control environments. is an Emotional Manipulation — one of the more complex emotional strategies — an orchestrated dance that makes out of our relationships a tug-of-war where one of the stakes is the emotional power. I am not talking here about draining emotions, but of an emotional strategy that makes out of draining emotions the opening shot of a battle. To navigate these rocks, we need Emotional Manipulation courses, for we cannot avoid these tricky places if we keep to the old course any longer.

The Puppet Master:

Anna was unwittingly caught up in the shifting dynamics of what can best be described emotionally as a dance of guilt, a demonstrative process that would employ all the feelings in its construction and manipulation as emotions and guilt took turns in the puppet-master role. Anna described how she felt like a 'zombie in some way' being manipulated by her friend. She felt that she had lost some of her confidence to speak up for herself. Anxiety, which was profoundly influenced by guilt, had taken over. 81 Anna's friend was a master at Emotional Manipulation and was expert at using guilt, expectations, fear of missing out, and many other feelings as a tactic to gain control over behavior. Feelings were the payoff, and Anna found herself in the landscape of compliance where performing the right reaction was both the law of the land and the expectation. What makes it manipulative is it uses the power of cunning emotional engineering, which masters the art of control that exists in a playground where sticking to the rules is an art, and where one's very move in the game was dictated by being wired with the need to respond to the strings of emotional manipulation. The story of Anna serves as a warning, a mirror through which to search for the seeds of Emotional Manipulation, to recognize the tango, and respond accordingly. In response to emotional manipulation, if you wish to tango, but not necessarily with your partner, preserve your emotional bubble and boundaries because your ability to do so serves as the dance of resistance.

Avoidance Strategy:

The Self-Aware Sage The Avoidance Tip is the bulletin of a sentinel; mind movement — or feelings — and any of that 'you're being a selfish jerk without a soul' rigmarole. Pause and ask yourself how you feel. Watch out for efforts to get you to regulate your own feelings. This, then, is the building of a mind-guard in a moment of E Manip. Self-awareness is the emotional firewall that shields you from the arsenal of Emotional Manipulation. As you develop an awareness of emotional atmospheres and spot guilt tripping techniques, you unravel yourself from a spider web and connect to a powerful center of

emotional sovereignty. The avoidance tip is the exhortation to be committed to your own emotional integrity, and to navigate social worlds within resilience and self-awareness. The Avoidance Tip serves as a reminder to those skilled at reading characters in a sort of tango, a rallying cry to self-awareness, the foundation of emotional integrity and self-sovereignty. Against Emotional Manipulation, the wise response is vigilance — the awareness of the dance, and the ability to move with independence through relationships.

Tactic 23

The Bait and Switch

Offering something

desirable then changing the terms or conditions 83

The Unveiled Illusion *Psychological Impact:*

In The Bait and Switch, the stage is set for the deception: the state of mind of the victim is tainted by the dual shades of mirage and untrustworthiness. Their soul is polluted by a psychological history of promise and disappointment when they buy something that isn't what they were hoping for.

Manipulative Aspect:

The skillful Bait and Switch operator, dancing the steps, will promise something good (a bait) and later change terms or conditions on delivery; it's calculated, not a byproduct. The Bait and Switch becomes the storytelling medium in which promises are the bait, and the switch is the tongue of the manipulator. The important element of the story becomes not just the stories but rather the actions in stories, because the act of altering terms is manipulative. Altering terms is the way in which the storytelling space is constructed to make gain an art, and victims feel like losers. The Bait and Switch is an exceedingly clever piece of emotional strategy — a calculated sleight of hand that turns promises into a scene of aggression. It's not just an act of promising, it's of sabotaging — a sleigh ride into winning. For those immersed in the delicate balance of relationships, the ancient wisdom of The Bait and Switch can mean the difference between witnessing a phantom unveiled and embracing the opportunity to navigate with a firm resolve for maintaining trust and agency.

The Bait and Switch Chronicles:

The Bait and Switch is just another manifestation of the unfolding saga, even though the game has shifted: in this particular case, the promises

blindingly presented in the rebuild phases of a operational management team turn into a mirage when new terms are eventually offered to the workers. The illusion is as follows: We won't discuss salary details just yet, but our higher-up wants you to do the job so we're willing to go with your 84 initial rounds of negotiations; essentially, we're going to give you the salary that you've asked for, because this position is a great opportunity for you — let's seal the deal! And then, just as Alex moves into the selection cycle, he is offered a job with a much lower salary than promised. Alex's feelings of being misled, disappointed and mistrustful towards the organization kick in. The promises of better-than-expected salary become the focus of a battleground of disappointment and shattered trust, and bleed into confidence in career choices. The Bait and Switch is a tactic in the mind-game known as attitudinal disarmament and, in my experience, it always features a carefully crafted switch. Attitudinal disarmament is the employer's calculated method of changing terms at the very moment they have the team most committed to choosing a contract. One of the reasons it is not effective as a persuasion tactic for many people is that it reeks of desperation. The employer gives up control and, in the employee's eyes, looks weak. Why, then, does an employer ever use it tactically? Because it pins their gaze upon you and robs them of the opportunity to glance at the alternatives around you. It keeps their eyes and emotions engaged with you. At the same time, they notice that, under the condition of making a surprising and unwelcome switch, it robs the employee of choice while seeming to allow them to choose. It offers choice but makes the employee responsible for an outcome raised on very little, with all the loss left to them and their hopes. This is insidious because the tactic's manipulation is in its calculated switching of terms presented by an employer who knows that they have gained at the employee's loss. These chronicles are a warning: a rearview mirror that helps us discern The Bait and Switch at work in professions. They reveal an illusion, and they invite a response. In response to the promises that have petered out, how should we maintain our own trust — and our own freedom?

Avoidance Strategy:

The Expectation Clarifier The strategic move on the chess board of professional engagements is the Use of the Avoidance Tip, which calls for clarity in clarifying expectations, and entails clear-cut agreements setting standards that are documented accurately. When The Bait and Switch results in changed terms, the expectation clarifier re-intervenes to re-work any agreement whether financial or non-financial, to ensure fair play. — This is

the first of the avoidance tips, and clarifying expectations is like that cone placed in the middle of the road when there is roadwork. That one above the dirt patch on the way to a construction zone does not ask you to stop, but the very presence of that cone helps dissolve the temptation to coax you into disrespecting the idle yellow line and veer towards the dirt work. When you have clear expectations outlined and written down, your professional agreements form a strong barrier reliably deflecting The Bait and Switch, be it from an organization, a manager, or a job candidate. — This is the second of the avoidance tips and reflects a commitment to preserving your own trust in professional agreements. When you are confronted with issues of trust in professional relationships — whether it's choosing between jobs or letting your boss know that you can't move to a new location — using these tips will allow you to prepare and protect your career choices with better information. For those with a keen radar for these professional nuances, especially in a role, organization or country where it's clear that The Bait and Switch lurks beneath the surface, the Avoidance Tip is a mantra: clarifying expectations is the foundation for building trust and equitability. The Avoidance Tip is all about something broader: expectation vigilance. Understanding when something is off is the first step to successfully navigating professional contexts driven by The Bait and Switch.

Tactic 24

Future Faking

Promising a great future

together to manipulate someone in the present

The Illusion Of Tomorrow *Psychological Impact*:

Future Faking is a hallucination of tomorrow, shimmering with the heat of deception, false hope and false investment. You've been evoked to act or feel in a particular way, then allowed to rest easily, believing that your loyalty will be rewarded in the future. The subtle impact of this kind of manipulation can stay with the victim for a long time. Crime and punishment cause wounds that cut deep. Living with the knowledge that someone used hope and trust to lure a victim towards pain and suffering is traumatic. You view hope and trust differently after such a betrayal.

Manipulative Aspect:

After all, the master of Future Faking crafts the illusion, greasing the

skids to enable deception, promises a good future, raises false hopes and expectations as an inevitability. It is not a mere by-product of or resulting from viewing the future as the bait yet the stage is also the present and the instrument is future-promised. The deceptive aspect is using future-promising as a tactic to sustain engagement in the present due to the interaction of hope deferred and false hope. Future Faking is a stroke of emotional strategy — a mirage designed to turn promises about the future into a contest over who controls the reins of compliance. It's not that they lie about how nice things will be tomorrow. It's that they try to turn promises about tomorrow into a form of thumbscrews designed to make today go their way. Learning to bear the truth is one of the biggest challenges for someone attending to the minutiae of relationships and, when things are all too uncomplicated, Future Faking becomes one of the best tools for navigating a world full of ambiguity and conflict, where one must remain true to one's own hope and autonomy.

The Future that'll Never be:

In the unfolding saga of manipulation, Sarah found herself entangled in the illusion of Future Faking—a play where promises about a bright future became a mirage, leaving a trail of deception, false investment, and hesitancy over the authenticity of the relationship. Sarah had felt betrayed and drawn into a play she wasn't ready for, one that had invited her to invest in a fiction that had left her questioning the authenticity of the relationship. Promises of tomorrow had become a site for the exchange of psychic investment eroded by betrayal. Sarah's husband, the master of Future Faking, deployed it with intent. He would bargain for the future in order to shape the present: he could enjoy conformity because he could tell her that 'This may not be very amazing now, but there is a beautiful future ahead — is there anything you want to change about this place?' The conning was the false promise that did not lead to action, the single weapon that kept holding on to the now, never dealing with the present. Future Faking therefore exercised control over the present, under the veil of the promise of what was to come. The Sarah saga is a cautionary tale. It is also a mirror, helping to show us how dangerous it is when Future Faking worms its way into a relationship, and what you can do if you catch yourself looping through cycles of The Story. See clearly what's real and act accordingly. If someone says one thing about tomorrow but does the opposite today, whether you know it or not, you'd be wise to find a way to hold on to your own hope and independence.

Avoidance Strategy:

The Action Validator This is the purpose of the damn Action

Validator: validate the action, not the promise. Validate, does this promise fit with my current actions and plans? Yes. NO. This is how you turn harmful Future Faking into something that makes your relationship healthier. If your partner doesn't schedule things on the calendar, you find room in your life to allow them to betray you. You decide not to care. But if you're a strong individual who is seeking trustworthiness, you should fight against that. Create an Action Validator: someone who checks that your plans make sense, are important, and are realistic. This is one of those essential strategic maneuvers that almost every good relationship will engage in — build an Action Validator because you're in a relationship with a Future Faker. Validation tactics serve as a bulwark against Future Faking when you make sure the promises of exchange between yourself and your partner are backed up by emotionally invested actions and intentions. The avoidance hack challenges you to strengthen your ongoing commitment to maintaining your own hopefulness and agency — and to weather the storm. For those who can keep things in running order on the emotional terrain, the Avoidance Tip serves as a mantra — action begets authenticity begets trust, and anything else you promise about tomorrow always gets defended by anything your actions say today.

Tactic 25

Scapegoating

Blaming someone else for

problems or mistakes to avoid responsibility

The Blame Game *Psychological Impact:*

Scapegoating therefore shows itself as blaming: a 'play' in the theater of manipulation, a maneuver by which the victim feels and is offered someone's guilt, an unfair guilty imputation, a responsibility for what is not so, attributed to the person upon whom one projects one's own inability to deal with the painful and dangerous feelings. In this 'play', consequences are an accumulation of affects that the victims experience as internally felt as one's own.

Manipulative Aspect:

Blame-giving becomes the culmination of a deliberate scapegoat game, a rapid machine gun of blame-giving that detours responsibility away, and therefore control of the situation, down the path of finger-pointing. The manipulation factor lies in the act of making a scapegoat out of someone in

order to avoid taking responsibility for the State Of things and thereby to maintain oneself in control. Used as an interpersonal strategy, blame therefore becomes Scapegoating: the cynical assignation of responsibility becomes the locus of competitive power games. Rather than blaming in a simple, intuitive way, Scapegoating is a power move, a calculated bid for control, a way to avoid accountability through the subtle imposition of blame. If you find yourself negotiating your way through a complex landscape in your relationship, you might want to read studies on Scapegoating. This way you can learn to name the blame game and get a head start on playing fair with yourself.

The Team Turmoil:

The forum for the now goodbye was a team project. That forum was changed into 'a theater of scapegoating', The backstage was the fabrication of an accusation without evidence thrown at one of the members. She was accused of things she hadn't done, which left her feeling off-balance, deflated, and then isolated. 92 Every time the peers accused her, things had gone wrong, and she had to carry the emotional baggage of blame for incidents in which she was either not involved or mostly innocent. On a psychological level, from the empathy perspective, being targeted consisted of (l) susceptibility to intrusive accusation, (2) having one's morale plummet, and specific to the target (3) having a wake-up call to feeling isolated. The Master Scapegoater, who played the ultimate blame game within the team, shifted blame off himself even in the absence of evidence. The goal was not merely to find someone to blame but, using the other attributes of the blame game, he shifted blame to evade accountability and control the team's perception. Scapegoating served self-interest: it was the Default Technique to control perceptions, thereby taking the collusive team away from effective thinking. The Team Turmoil chronicles are a cautionary tale, a metaphorical mirror for Scapegoating in the workplace as observed in the team context. The story brings the blame cycle into the spotlight and demands a strategic response. To remain fair and autonomous, a team member who perceives negative feedback as unfair condemnation and team rejection must resist the pull of drowning.

Avoidance Strategy:

The Clarity Advocate In the social battleground with teams or couples, the directive for The Clarity Advocate is to avoid like the plague. Be clear about roles and obligations and stay committed to your roles and responsibilities in the group. Deal with issues as a team, don't throw blame at

someone. For Avoidance, the Tip is turned into a prescription for group life. Make your relationship one in which you trade blame for clarity, and assign responsibility to others. In the flowchart of human interaction, The Clarity Advocate is the lighthouse that guides you away from the Scapegoating trap: clarity about who does what frees you from strands of bad faith and collective shunning. The 'avoiding' tip: Be a champion of a company, family or relationship that values fair processes and individual autonomy, and uses resilience and shared responsibility to navigate. But for those familiar with practicing alongside the shifting contours of a team, The Clarity Advocate becomes a mantra — a reminder that, in overcoming what gets in the way of collaboration, 93 shared commitments to clarity about who is doing what is an essential lever. A relationship about whose responsibilities? A relationship about whose responsibilities!

Tactic 26

Condescension

Talking down to someone

to make them feel inferior or subservient

The Art of Undermining *Psychological Impact:*

Condescension is the carefully controlled capability of demeaning — a strategic move against victims that produces feelings of inferiority, feelings of being routed, and demoralization that includes feelings of depression. The result is an avalanche of negative feelings born of the sheer magnified weight of a condescending comment.

Manipulative Aspect:

The Condescender is particularly skilled at Undermining — talking down with deliberation. This act of condescension is not a byproduct of personal scrutiny — it's a step in a process. Condescension is a mechanism Of Undermining. It reduces confidence. And then, because confidence is low, Influence sets in. The art behind the scenario is the deliberation behind the act of Undermining that precedes Influence. It's a particularly clever play in the interpersonal arena — a condescension tactic, a near art form that turns communication into a power play. Condescension isn't just a matter of speaking to or about a person flatly 'below'. It's an attack of strategic maneuvers aimed at keeping people in their place. As with everything else, there are gradations of Condescension for those of us who are feeling our way

across the shifting terrain of close relationships: a lesson in the art of undercutting and cutting (but not cutting through) someone while holding fast to a bedrock of self-worth and confidence.

Condescension Chronicles:

The operation of the condescension chronicles became part Of the Gruesome Manipulation Tales in a graphic design team where Sarah sought to develop her skills as a graphic designer but faced the undermining impact of her senior colleague, David. 96 It began with a smile and friendly phrases. 'Oh hey Sarah!,' he'd say on the first of four meetings. 'First-time experiences are always exciting.' Next time they met he'd say 'Your work is... interesting' And then: 'You'll come along though . . . ' Everywhere she went he went, and she found herself no longer speaking up, no longer sharing ideas. Of course, she hadn't had any good ideas for weeks, at this point; only vague remarks from David, although he always appeared to be nice about it. Sometimes she can't even say she had the gumption to try. Sarah's confidence and interest in her job suffered under the weight of condescending putdowns. The master of Condescension, conniving the nuanced undermining of the team, implementing the patronizing tones and comments strategically so as to manipulate an air of importance, was not merely talking down to Sarah; it was a manipulation of a tactical sort managing the dominance of the team by condescension. David's condescending behavior aimed at stripping Sarah's self-esteem by asserting his superiority in the team so as to maintain the dominance in the team strategically. The Condescension Chronicles are a cautionary tale, a looking-glass, warning that subversion lurks behind condescension and that it arrives dripping with rhetoric that's laced with poison. Condescension can be insidious, but — if we recognise it for what it is — it can be fought. You can't go into battle shotgun-style, only half-heartedly suspecting an insurgency — you'll get played. When someone feigns agreement before unloading criticism or doubts, throws pity at you, motivates you by pointing out how little you've accomplished, or turns little victories into crushing defeats, the secret to survival is stepping back, taking stock and reminding yourself of your worth and confidence.

Avoidance Strategy:

The Confrontation Diplomat When it comes to the politics of interpersonal encounters, The Confrontation Diplomat is the avoider's diplomat. Confront that condescension head-on, politely but firmly. The Avoidance Tips suggest going directly to the offending party — firmly and politely confronting the condescension. It's an aggressive move, for it tries to

strip away the condescender's behavioral reflexes. Raising the condescender's awareness of what they are doing can help lead to a more respectful interaction. 97 Thus The Confrontation Diplomat is the antidote for those seeking to navigate the complex world of relationships — an assurance that confrontation, done right, is a valuable and indispensable weapon. With politeness and firmness, you can stand up to condescension, repaying it with only more polite responses.

Tactic 27

Manufactured Crisis

Creating or exaggerating a
crisis to manipulate emotions or actions

Manipulation through Chaos *Psychological Impact:*

This co-option, a kind of taking of the soul, is Manufactured Crisis's masterstroke — the Wu-Tang Clan's Cales's change, or the most impure of mixtures, because the crisis is made up of a heady mix of anxiety, stress and mental and emotional anguish.

Manipulative Aspect:

The manipulator of the Manipulative Tapestry executes this maneuver with the systematic use of Manufactured Crisis, which is not, strictly speaking, simply a crisis but an attempt to create or exaggerate a crisis. Manufactured Crisis is an emotional lever used to attain a manipulative end either of control over or leverage on some situation. This use of Manufactured Crisis is the manipulative part of the larger use of the Manipulative Tapestry. It is emotionally wrong to create turmoil simply to make the other person emotionally wrong. Interpersonal strategy, too, has become a form of Manufactured Crisis — a way of framing something as a battle over an emotional minefield that can be instigated, escalated and recalibrated for personal advantage. In the difficult terrain of relationships, Manufactured Crisis offers new grads and battle-scarred veterans alike a guide to the language of manipulation and the importance of staying true to one's own heart.

The Art of Urgency Unleashed:

Inside the manufacturing crisis chronicles the workplace game, the boss who unleashed the urgency tornado declares that a specific project has become urgent, and must now be rushed to completion; suddenly, the

manageable timeline is in tatters. This felt to us like a psychological pot thrown at a team playing a decent game; panic breaks out as people try to accommodate a new sense of urgency and confusion escalates, reducing team performance. 100 The master of Manufactured Crisis, the art of manufacturing urgency, as the situation was called inside the company, was trying to escalate feelings of urgency that required concomitant behavioral reactions in the team. The manager manufactured urgency because urgency provided a handle to control the team's behavior, perhaps to demonstrate power, while perhaps hiding the manager's own inefficiencies behind the manufactured chaos. In that way, the Manufactured Crisis Chronicles serve as a kind of parable, a mirror in which we can reflect on who is spinning which wheels of crisis. The final Chronic shows us how to navigate a workplace crisis of this kind. Tossing the Baton is, I think, the ultimate and most crucial strategy for maintaining your own sense of self in the midst Of manufactured crisis. When we're required to do things quickly but without preplanning, we're oftentimes keeping someone else's agenda on track. Amid all the manufactured urgency, the ability to change gears and switch perspectives can be crucial.

Avoidance Strategy:

The Scrutiny Sentinel When it comes to the high stakes of social strategy, The Scrutiny Sentinel becomes the bastion of Avoidance. Scrutinize information, before responding to a manufactured crisis With the Scrutiny Sentinel on your side, you have the skill to deploy facts and evidence to avoid over-identification with manifest narratives of manufactured chaos — from leaking pipes to insurrection, fake news to real violence. It is a Machiavellian maneuver to operationalize the Scrutiny Sentinel, since it is your switch stone that mobilizes the shield of oversight, scrutiny, and questioning to protect you from falling for carefully curated stories of calculated crises. More effective than skepticism, the Scrutiny Sentinel steps in, before you buy into the carefully orchestrated fiction and become one of its mindless minions channeling manufactured chaos. Never believe anything, until verifying the facts, considering alternative interpretations, questioning and listening to others. So, the Avoidance Tip advocates the pillar of protection, the Scrutiny Sentinel. Be sure to operationalize this counter tactic with Counter-Conditioning — the first to get to the authentic facts is the first to get the upper hand. The Scrutiny Sentinel becomes a player's guide. Its messages affirm that transparent deliberation is a powerful ally for those navigating

life's tricky interpersonal moves. But even more than that, we can see how the Sentinel directs us all to a new way of responding to manufactured crisis: it encourages us to pause, peruse information with a critical eye, to stay sane, to avoid acting irrationally on the basis of disinformation, and generally to believe those people who broach Our trust by talking about their favorite pastime of scrutiny.

Tactic 28

Over-Compliance

Agreeing excessively or pretending to comply to manipulate a situation

The Puppeteer's Art *Psychological Impact:*

Over-Compliance: A masterstroke — the puppeteer achieves the desired effect that leaves the puppet feeling used because the puppet feels conflicted and confused. The initial psychological experience is the feeling of comfort from you lowering your guard.

Manipulative Aspect:

Over-Compliance is the expert puppeteer able to pull the strings of Over-Compliance to play the game of pretending. Like Under-Compliance this is business, not pleasure; compliant pretense; insincere compliance. Over-Compliance is used as an instrument whose purpose is to either manipulate or perpetuate a situation in the interest of the manipulator and at the cost of the victim. The deceitfulness Of Over-Compliance is that it involves playing along by misrepresenting how you really feel. Over-Compliance is a strategic move in the competitive dance of inter-personality; it transforms interactions into a veritable staging area for theater, where one actor dances to the tune of another. It's interpersonal, not compliance. But if you're playing with that kind of fury, then for you, in navigating relationships, a glimpse into the inner workings of Over-Compliance is an education in the power of manipulation and in holding the line — whatever the personal cost.

A Tale of Puppetry Unveiled:

Lisa is part of a team project with other students in her class where each student in turns offers a suggestion of how to structure the assignment. Lisa agrees to all of the suggestions by her fellow team members, even if she had misgivings... By this time, the puppeteers of the Over-Compliance Chronicles knew they could take advantage of the power of Lisa's over-compliance. 104 They get Lisa to agree with something banal, and then leverage that agreement to get her to agree to more things, by the use of

repetition, especially in a group setting. The culprits can use peer pressure to increasingly mise the stakes of what Lisa agrees with until it feels too awkward to say no to future requests, This is often done with smiles and positive reinforcement to confuse the victim into thinking that they are doing something that has a favorable outcome for everyone involved. Still, consider the two-step from the puppet-masters' perspective, They may look forward to her saying or doing something in such a way that they can reassert control over a movement they have now decided they would prefer to end, They will work With a partially over-compliant response — don't mind if she says it again, that way her readymade response is taken out of their control — only if her words are at least 'plausibly' a repetition of something they might have said, The puppets in over-compliance are not categorially passive. Over-compliance is not just mindless imitation of the words and actions of others. The constitutive magic of over-compliance is found elsewhere, in the orchestrated character of the two-step 'dance' that other people get the locals to do. a sense, then, The Over-Compliance Tales, as well as being an exploration, is also a warning. By reflecting back at us the mastery of puppetry that might trip up group life, it might trigger individual warning signals too. It can point towards a process of over-compliance, and invite a different kind of calculation. To stay on the back of the buffalo, and to be the one leading the herd, can be in the land of the puppets, a question of agency. For those who want to see it, your cursor is on the line below.

Avoidance Strategy:

Asserting Your Own Needs Avoidance being a safety valve for her in the complex puppet show of The Over-Compliance Chronicles.' When, in the course of the story, extreme compliance consumes Lisa, avoidance becomes her salve. To ward off this kind of enthusiastic agreement and collaboration, the first step of avoidance is to define hard barriers. Notice when you are in a situation where there is expected agreement, and let your boundaries be a shield that keeps puppeteers from intruding. In The Over-Compliance Chronicles, perhaps Lisa should have suggested a movie elsewhere, thereby asserting her own agenda and needs. 105 In this narrative of constraint, however, avoiding is not about receding but about standing up. Be mindful of the puppeteers' ploys, and maintain, in self-defense, your agenda as well. In The Over-Compliance Tales, Lisa might have steered herself safely through the minefield if only she had spoken up a bit, if her voice had soared above the scored unisons. At its core, the avoidance tip is about resisting the

temptation to fold under the cardiac gloom of compliance that corrodes your values or wellbeing. Had she been more alert to the potential of over-compliance to bias her to her peril, Lisa's narrative from The Over-Compliance Tales could have been very different. As an alt form, avoidance is about being able to say 'no' when it matters most, in Order to stay faithful to one's beliefs and practices.

Tactic 29

Emotional Neglect

Withholding emotional

support or validation to manipulate feelings

The Void Within *Psychological Impact:*

For Emotional Neglect is the flip side of emotional manipulation. It has the power to manipulate almost as powerfully as its opposite. But its terrible influence doesn't take the form of demands or shaming; it's far more insidious. If you're an Emotional Neglect victim, what you feel above all is worthless. You feel lonely. You feel starved. The unmistakable emptiness in your soul bleeds with the sounds of what you were always denied and what you never felt inside. It resonates with the unmistakable notes of unloved emotions.

Manipulative Aspect:

Emotional Neglect (like physical and sexual abuse) is a skillful form of emotional manipulation, in which the act is to subtly withhold caring, emotionally supporting or validating their child. It's not a matter of carelessness or forgetfulness, but rather often a deliberate tactic but carried out with enough skill as to have the manipulative effect of creating a need in the victim (of Emotional Neglect) to rely on the caregiver to handle emotions, making them increasingly dependent on the subtle manipulator. It is not merely about the absence of gestures; it is a deliberate act of withholding, creating a yearning for emotional connection that strengthens the puppeteer’s control. For those navigating the complex tapestry of relationships, understanding the intricacies of Emotional Neglect becomes essential. It is a journey into the depths of emotional manipulation, urging individuals to recognize the void within and seek healthier, more fulfilling connections.

The Art of Emotional Power Play:

Mark had found his place in the theater of emotional drama: a story of emotional deprivation that would build its twisted wings inside the dark halls of his psyche. Extending himself to his partner during particularly difficult times was his way of sharing the burden and the emotional load. 108 However, his attempts to find a co-regulatory space in their relationship were met with a carefully planned all-out cold shoulder. The effect was gradual, like turning a dial to the right or left, from someone who had extended himself in a bid for a feeling of regulation, Mark soon found himself emotionally isolated, left behind as an important partner with whom to share life, experience it, and face its challenges together. Mark had experienced emotional neglect. But Mark's partner, a master of an emotional version of relational chess, starts with emotional neglect as a tactical maneuver, a strategy embodied in emotional invalidation. Why tactical? Why invalidating? And why emotional? Particularly when the person from whom the tactic is being delivered as chilled validation is terminally and emotionally lost. Once we begin to think tactically and invalidate, we can begin to recognize the game as a form of manipulation — and emotional withholding as a strategic move, Mark perceives himself as being thwarted with blocks to successful communication, Ile sees his partner as a skillful manipulator and a master of emotional terror. And the rest was misery. He uses relational chess concepts to explain what's happened to him and the forces working to shape their relationship. By holding back emotionally, Mark's partner had succeeded in pushing him towards her, creating more dependence, more need — and so enhancing her position of relative control. She had, through skill or chance, initiated a relational manipulation strategy, a dance that would, on its own, tend to weaken Mark and reinforce her hand. This narrative of cold tactics becomes a masterclass in the game of emotional strategy — a window into an emotional power-play game that indicates who wins and how. In the uncertainty of interpersonal relations, the skill to discern emotional power strategy becomes critical, as it is a defense against manipulative forces that seek to dominate the emotional territory.

Avoidance Strategy:

Learn to Navigate the Emotional Battlefield The avoidant strategy 'might just be a self-preservation tactic in the face of emotional neglect' That kind of neglect makes shareable advice difficult to find, but I did come across one piece of advice that I found most compelling: state your needs. It seems like such a simple thing, and yet it is truly a transformative piece of relational

advice. It is a declaration of needs but also of boundaries. It is a shout of supplication in the midst of some real, or perceived, emotional deprivation. The avoider tip insists on articulating these needs as part of a deliberate communicative strategy. If you are on the brink of experiencing emotional neglect, communicating would be a way of creating a channel over which you can say: feel hurt'.

Tactic 30

Fear Mongering

Instilling fear to manipulate

behavior or decisions 111

The Arsenal of Darkness *Psychological Impact:*

Fear Mongering, in the great puppet theater of manipulation, is a show-stopping act of bully mentalism — a drama about drama itself, an industry of inciting the self-perception of anxiety, fear, and fear-motivated action. The puppeteer sings to the puppet: this is your story, trembling in fear of attacks from all sides.

Manipulative Aspect:

The puppeteer wields the sword of Fear Mongering to perpetrate this manipulative art, which is not so much about warning as it is about manipulating behavior or decisions for the purpose of achieving the puppeteer's own, typically hidden agenda. The art lies in employing fear as leverage — to nudge or manipulate behavior toward an ulterior end. As the puppeteer, Fear Mongering is the puppeteer's weapon of choice, its use a puppet-mastered art of manipulation of, or operatic use, of the basic human desire for self-preservation. It's not a matter of inducing fear in this formula (emotion dictates choice) but again the puppeteer's use of induction of dread to put the puppet in a dance of fear that programmed fear dictates its own obedience. Fear Mongering is a lesson in how to recognize the intricacies of manipulation for those suffering across the land of bullying, as well as a guide on how to fight the use of fear by the puppet-master and take back some regulatory power in the face of stage-managed terror.

False Flag Community Meeting:

As a puppeteer in the theater of manipulation, Fear Mongering made the spotlight his own at a community meeting, where he wove an exaggerated tale of danger around an otherwise minor problem. The audience grew alarmed and apprehensive, rousing a chorus of fear in their fellow

townspeople. 112 The speaker's fear led them afoul, turning normally cool-headed minds into panicked zealots. This community was no longer peaceful, their serenity a memory. The puppeteer's story had toyed with their emotions, corrupting their reason and establishing a vicious cycle of reaction. What made this act of Fear Mongering so insidious, persuasive and manipulative, then, was the fact that the fear itself was being purposely overblown. The puppeteer was attempting to manage and, indeed, manipulate the spectators, fishing for ownership of their sentiments. This example reminds those in the know of puppetry how obediently they had once emulated the behavior of animals faced with an attack. It should make them wish they had learned to do just one thing better: think and resist.

Avoidance Strategy:

The Fact Checker Indeed, Avoidance can become a skill — a way of moving through the milieus that stem from threats of abandonment and shame. It's not wishful thinking or evasion, but a strategic means to protect autonomy and agency from fear-based tactics. To not get caught up in fear tactics, the adept actor in the private and public spheres must learn to check the facts. As a result of fear mongering, if you receive a message about something that is playing on your fears, the strategist checks out the mail from whom it came. Interestingly, this is not a passive act, but subversive because it actively questions the motive for employing fear, and seeking the puppeteer's agenda. On some level, avoidance is a way of cutting the puppeteer's strings: deciding what to do based on the facts, rather than on an emotion that a frightened puppeteer is trying to manipulate you to feel. Every thoughtful Avoidenteer — now there's a new word — walks with deliberate and proud steps, her path lit by the light of sound judgment.

Tactic 31

Intellectual Manipulation

Using intellect or

knowledge to control or dominate a conversation

The Mind Game Master *Psychological Impact:*

Intellectual Manipulation is one of the best moves in the game — especially for a shared delusion With Intellectual Manipulation, the psychological effect of each move begins with the manipulator taking control of the conversation and using his Alpha status as leverage to convince the

victim that he is less knowledgeable and capable than his manipulator. And the victim is actually on a chessboard of minds. Now he feels intellectually powerless. Through his predictable moves and strategies, the perpetrator purposefully causes confusion in the victim's life, to make him feel intellectually entirely vulnerable. It's a game — but one played after an irrevocable game called life.

Manipulative Aspect:

It's about following the rules of Intellectual Manipulation, using it as a strategic tool to control and dominate. Intellectual Manipulation is the tactical approach to dominate an interaction, pulling the strings to disarm the victim in a conversation, making him or her feel intellectually impotent and out of control. Then, sharing information becomes less a matter of factual insight that true believers can benefit from, and more about scoring points in an intellectual game of power, with the virtuoso playing a hand that successfully sprints the race between cooperation and freeriding. Cunning intelligences rush to take the lead. If there are rules of engagement — strategies for defeating an attacker — Intellectual Manipulation helps prepare you for the slipperiness of this little-studied world of intellectual interactions, and it can help you build some resilience. It's about walking that fine tightrope of manipulative interactions with a commitment to preserving your own intellectual agency and resisting inductions that turn you into an intellectual automaton. There are intellectual chess-playing skills you need to develop to keep your own intellectual autonomy.

The Dominant Discourse:

Intellectual life was portrayed not dissimilarly to a workplace seminar: an undisputed senior executive, littering his discourse with intellectual jargon and dismissing ideas from junior employees, created an intellectual shadow that made the junior staff feel intellectually inferior, demotivated, and less willing to contribute to discussions. Intellect was harnessed as an instrument of the boss's strategic dance of dominance, and was deployed tactically as a form of intellectual domination. Its function was primarily strategic, aimed at 'drowning' others through superior intellect in order to control the agenda, perhaps to back off earlier or to dissuade others (juniors) from offering alternative views. This was an exercise of power, not knowledge. Intellectual bullying is important because it is a way to exert power, both in individual encounters, and in controlling how those around you perceive the world that you both inhabit. It is an attempt to manipulate the intellectual territory that you both have available, and encourages you to

explore it critically and skillfully. By overwhelming others with their intellectual prowess, they aimed to maintain an unchallenged grip on discussions, potentially discouraging dissent and stifling contributions from the junior members. In the grand theater of workplace dynamics, intellectual manipulation emerges as a tool not only for asserting dominance but for shaping the very narrative that unfolds. It is a lesson in recognizing the subtle maneuvers that seek to influence the intellectual landscape, urging individuals to navigate the intricate terrain with discernment and resilience.

Avoidance Strategy:

The Knowledge Guardian Enter the arena of ideas with the shield of knowing. Inform yourself. Gather the wealth of what you know, expanding and deepening your contributions to discussions. If the murmur of intellectualistic tyranny begins to roil, launch counter-knowledge. Beware the upstart wisdom broker, hoarding knowledge. But rather value knowledge as an equalizing ambassador of reasonable discussion, a compelling symposium of ideas trying to find the truth. Here, in the intellectual arena, the continuing knowledge are not just repositories of information, but shapers of minds, like pebbles tossed in the river of discourse. Standing guard at the doorway of this intellectual strategy is the act of informing oneself, of sharing one's own insights and knowledge. Wielding in one's use of information a sword of knowledge is how you safeguard against intellectual entrapment. The avoidance tip is one about standing up for yourself in an intellectual exchange or conversation, for keeping your own intellectual identity and perspective alive in a way that invites response rather than manipulation. For those who have adopted the warrior skills for intellectual jousting, the Avoidance Tip becomes a survival rule — knowledge is not just power, it's a head-quarters. In the new order of (intellectual) sticks and stones of war, the way to counter mind manipulation is to first stay on the side of your intellectual borders, follow the news, and keep on marching intellectually with gumption and grit.

Tactic 32

Cultural Manipulation

Exploiting cultural norms

or expectations to manipulate

The Targeting of Cultural Dynamics *Psychological Impact:*

Cultural Manipulation, the backbone of Cultural Interactions, is a

form of sociological manipulation in which the rules of two (or more) cultures collide, and victims are left feeling victimized, wrong, or coerced, or perhaps have those feelings aggressively reinforced by the perpetrator. The effects are more subtle than stated outright, but act on psychological factors, with the perpetrator of the mindfuck operating the psychological gears — perpetrator and victim alike swimming through cultural currents, caught in eddies, swirled and forced towards one another.

Manipulative Aspect:

The Cultural Manipulator is savvy; he knows that he can yank on one of the semantic threads that make up any moment to elicit a desired reaction. Cultural Manipulation should not be confused with Cultural Awareness, the talent to read social encounters successfully. Cultural Awareness concerns the intake of information, while Cultural Manipulation tries to exercise control. Cultural Manipulation is the intentional use of culture to sway a person's decision, behavior, or reaction This is where the 'manipulation' comes in because cultural manipulation is intentionally couched in the differential treatment of semantic threads to fit a larger social narrative in the moment. In the theater of cultural strategy, Cultural Manipulation is a move, an artifice, a project that is about turning the subtle balance of cultural ecology into a stage where one actor plays the tune of the dance because — even if I do not fully grasp the cultural details — I have mastered the script of cultural constraint and I am comfortable with the balance between constraint and free will. When it comes to Cultural Manipulation, the world of different races and cultures is awfully tricky. The gay man just needs careful elaboration — but if you venture into cultural contexts then you have to take cultural Manipulation seriously — with a firm adherence to individual autonomy, but also to cultural sensitivity.

The Art of Strategic Loyalties:

A devious manager, expert in how to manipulate human culture for his own convenience, leveraged the cultural expectation of family loyalty in the Eastern European community in his multinational workplace. This manager, from an East European background, also drew on another cultural bounty: the highly valued nature of family ties and clan loyalty. He knew that it generally mattered a lot to people from his cultural background what their extended family thought of them, and he rewarded employees with this family orientation by giving them promotions, news of their good work, or easy tasks. He elevated them, in other words, both visible and quiet ways. This was a subtle mechanism of division among the team. The non-Eastern Europeans

felt an unfairness in the system which works on the assumption that no matter what, you look after your kin. In the team's description, this led to tension in a cosmopolitan working environment where all perspectives are supposed to productively converge around the central 'company goal'. Being a global enterprise, the company is supposed to act as a connector and make connections, both within work and third-party groups. But here it used the alternative mechanism where someone's loyalty to another place, namely their home, could be put as a lever of domination. The manipulator, skillfully interpreting the cultural norm, has successfully seeded discord. What was once a team is now divided by tensions and misunderstandings. What the manager was playing to was a specific Eastern European cultural norm — that family pays attention to family. A cultural value was played and may have led to the manipulator getting the upper hand, the team is in a tangle, and the manipulator may be trying to benefit within the competitive jostling of working life.

Avoidance Strategy:

The Cultural Sentinel The Cultural Sentinel might look something like this: in that great and intricate sweep of cultural contact, be culturally literate. Know your culture. Discern cultural framing. The play is to be aware, to question that framing of culture, to take the high ground on the great plains of diverse tradition. 120 In the Cultural Sentinel's ballet of culture, recognition of its presence is no longer a paranoid fear of an overweening state bureaucracy, but an enlightenment for which we can rally together to minimize, if not forestall, backdoor bargains from going undetected. In ardently working to maintain the integrity and diversity of culture, we must adopt an approach that toes the line between cooperation and exploitation, and avoid naivety.

Tactic 33

Abandonment

Exploiting being left alone or

isolated to influence and manipulate

The Dark Alienation *Psychological Impact:*

The calculated nature of the act of renunciation provokes in the mind of the other a chaos leading the former subsequently to disorient and arouse in the latter an unmediated tide of anxiety, terror and insecurity that he refers to as the threat of the deprivation of the relationship with the significant other.

Manipulative Aspect:

Think of romantic abandonment (or threat of abandonment) as an emotion manipulation strategy in the playbook of today. The triangle's operator appeals to the most basic human fear — an avoidable, undesired and painful alienation from others (an existential horror). He or she wields the offensive weapon of abandonment by issuing precisely calibrated threats of the relationship imploding in order to maintain perpetual leverage over the target they want to control. Without much recourse, the target must do the operator's bidding (in this case, be forced into giving in to sex, material support, deference or whatever else the operator wants, in order to save the relationship from crumbling or flee the threat of abandonment and loneliness). Every step of the way, the psychological chess game favors the manipulator who uses the abandonment threat to great effect. Knowing that the concept of abandonment is the master switch, the targeted individual feels compelled to do whatever the manipulator wants or face this agonizing choice: either save the relationship or accept the flood of death-wishes and be alone. If compliance is the logically justified ladder to get-out-of-jail-free-card, playing by the master's rules is the only choice to avoid falling into the inferno. Once the drama has been set up, the manipulator, ensconced in a place of power, uses the threat of abandonment not just to control the victim, but as an art form, an ever-changing script and a set of evolving rules over how to communicate about the emotional relationship at hand. The threat becomes a dance, where the manipulator uses power and vulnerability as masterfully as a ballerina, calling the shots and leaving the target in a daze of emotional opacity. Each move in the dance is carefully profiled in such a way as to evoke compliance, to keep the other tamely bent to their will.

The Corporate Finesse:

In corporate America, Sarah's boss boldly used the threat of work dereliction towards Sarah, subtly recommending that when Sarah contested the manager's decisions/strategies or offered alternate strategies, potential repercussions of career isolation would follow. Here the threat of social disconnection was subtle yet emphatically ringing of the bell boding of the impending career estrangement and having a totalizing effect. Here, Sarah's mind was haunted by the anxiety of doubt and potential career isolation. Using abandonment in the workplace, the manipulative manager, who masters the art of emotional manipulation, effectively leverages abandonment threats (either expressed or implied) to ensure compliance and conformity. Through the threat of being abandoned — of being career abandoned — Sarah conformed to her manager's wishes and yielded to his judgments because

giving in was easier than risking being abandoned.

Avoidance Strategy:

Fortify Your Emotional Bastion When it comes to negotiating the morass of human relationship politics, armor up with the well-tested knowledge that the threat of a break-up is a cheap trick — but your sense of self-esteem can be a tower of strength. Make your emotional health your castle, and choose your friends and lovers for that very reason. Now, in this delicate tango, those who have spotted the manipulation the veiled threat to your identity contains are the true puppeteers of your emotional future. Move, dance, through the landscape with clarity, and you will attract to your entourages that are not only immune to the plea of heart-breaking emotional menace, but one that exists on the values of respectful resourcefulness.

Applying The 33 Tactics In the shadows, where nuanced streams of power and influence flow, is where 'The 33 Tactics of Dark Psychology' dissects those who attempt to manipulate, dominate and control others. It is not a manual for Machiavellian maneuvering but instead a strategic guide for the intelligent individual trying to make sense of the human metanarrative.

Learning these 33 tricks is not just an intellectual exercise. It's a survival tactic, for anyone who cares to understand what's really going on as people interact. It becomes a scanner for looking past the obvious, making sense of the shadow side of life and human behavior. Recognition is a protection. It's your warning clock when others are out to get you.

It's been an educational journey, one that guides the reader through the hints, the veiled glances, the duplicitous cover-ups, embracing an awareness that's sensitive to more than the abrasiveness of surface appearances and that can cast revealing glances on the hidden currents beneath the surface of transactions that might otherwise appear banal.

The book is not an unmasking of the techniques but a training in survival and shrewdness. Like a secret of the trade, it has equipped its reader in avoidance, technique and the means to navigate the stormy sea of manipulation with aplomb and tact. In the plain and pared down discussion of these deceptions, the reader has gained a tactical advantage in the subordination that human relationships inevitably imply.

From here on in, the reader is more than a receive-tank; he or she is an architect of their own life. Equipped with the savvy that now suffuses its

pages, this reader will be an architect of intimate and empowering relationships. The consciousness bred here becomes the engine of patterns that transcend the thralldoms.

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